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# MAKING PEACE, BUILDING THE STATE. RELATIONS BETWEEN CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND THE SAHELIAN PERIPHERIES IN NIGER AND MALI

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# Summary

On surface, Niger and Mali share fairly similar territorial configurations and historical trajectories. Recurring rebellions supported by mainly nomadic groups raise the question of relations between the centre and peripheries in these states. The purpose of this study is to analyse how these states try "*peacemaking*", in the absence of "*peacebuilding*", resulting in short-term hybrid arrangements that are cobbled together. The study integrates ways to make peace and wage war within a common analytical context. However, it is structured around an analysis of the forms of violent mobilisation followed by that of state actions.

## Factors and resources of violent collective dynamics

We consider the rebellion as the progressive (and not necessarily planned, nor linear) pooling of various types of resources, which temporarily gives rise to a violent political mobilisation. The result is rebellions with multiple motivations or even identities for which a simple answer may not be sufficient. We examine three types of structuring resources.

**- The first resource is ideological**. The ideological repertoire, which encourages the rebellion, includes world views, a sense of justice, or important normative principles.

**The protester-separatist repertoire** is the most evident among those voiced by successive rebellions. This explicit ideological mobilisation (which is opportunely combined with ecological and anti-terrorist arguments, as shown by the respective examples of the MNJ - Niger Movement for Justice - in Niger and the MNLA - National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad - in Mali) is essential for the group to be taken seriously locally, nationally, and internationally, but may simultaneously conceal other logics of mobilisation. This co-existence of different logics even within a rebel group which is homogeneous and united in its demands can explain the difficulties that states have in responding to it.

At a less publicly asserted level, **the figure of the rebel or former rebel** also remains highly valued in some segments of these nomadic societies, as well as with their foreign partners. This figure is also moulded according

to the evolution of the cycles of rebellion and their contents. New protest figures emerge. On the one hand, **the rise of the grey economy promotes the figure of the "social bandit."** On the other hand, the spread of aggressive political Islam valorises **the figure of the pious rebel**.

**- The second mobilisation factor refers to external dynamics.**

**The first of these dynamics corresponds to regional (Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco) or international (France) diplomatic interference in Sahelian political changes.** These peripheral powers can promote rebel dynamics or take advantage of them to push their agenda at the expense of their neighbours. Jihadist interference can be added to diplomatic interference – originally foreign since AQMI (Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb) historically came from Algeria – but which is now being endogenized with a specifically Sahelian jihad. It seems that some of the causes that have motivated the separatist mobilisation – injustice, the opportunity of social reclassification by protest, rejection of the state – are among the main causes for involvement with jihadist groups, to such an extent that it is no longer possible to think of the rebellion in Mali in isolation from terrorist groups.

**The other external factor is the influence of commercial economic resources (control of cross-border traffic)** not only on the outbreak, but also on the continuity of the rebellion. Trafficking interests are the main source of rebel funding. They deteriorate inter-community relations and fragment the armed groups. Far from being the prerogative of the rebels, trafficking is subject to competition with actors linked to the state. This complexifies the search for peace.

**- A third factor, which partly depends on the previous two, corresponds to the extent of the social base the rebellion has.** The individual decision to engage in or support a rebellion is often a personal choice, without planning or clear direction. However, the extent of the base largely depends on the actual community inclusiveness of the armed group making the demand. Historically, rebellions originate from inter-community alliances or communities in isolation.

**These three categories of resources combine to provide a broad spectrum of rebel dynamics. State strategies developed to deal with them are a reflection of this.** Because the factors shaping rebellions evolve and increasingly involve distant influences, the solutions traditionally thought

up by states to respond to the autonomous motivations of the armed groups are no longer enough. Thus, for the 2012 rebellion in Mali, the fighters' motivations largely originated from geopolitical upheavals, community rivalries, settling of personal scores, drug-trafficking interests, and the presence of AQMI in northern Mali. These motivations – are inconsistent with the catalogue of measures usually proposed for "peacemaking" – requiring a rethink of traditional peace engineering.

## Peacemaking in Mali and Niger

The recurring rebellions since 1963 in Mali and since 1991 in Niger are largely explained by the fact that the peace processes in the Sahel are much more about peacemaking than peacebuilding. The states of Mali and Niger have used seemingly similar procedures for "peacemaking", although Niger appears much more advanced through an integrated political framework and an innovative tension control and conflict prevention tool: the High Authority for the Consolidation of Peace (HACP).

**- Political integration.** Beyond significant structural differences with Mali, which have historically promoted North-South interaction in Niger, this country has a less polarising and more integrating political life which maintains the social peace. Often summarised as the simple co-optation of former rebels, the Nigerien integration system goes beyond this. Built around the existing government, the PNDS (Nigerien Party for Democracy and Socialism), it operates by controlling dissenting voices and by distributing government revenue that it monitors closely.

**- The grey economy as an integration factor and social safety valve.** Although it is undeniably a source of spreading, or even of triggering the rebellion, the grey economy also currently appears to be one of the factors for the relative stability in northern Niger. It also acts as a social safety valve in this area, without turning into armed violence because of the integrating qualities of its networks. It is a factor of conflict when it is subject to rivalries, as in Mali since the start of the 2000s, but the grey economy can produce integration when it is controlled by a small circle which channels the involvement of autonomous actors, or even co-opts and retains them. This configuration, which is fragile and risky in the medium-/long-term, is a short-term element of social peace. The challenge for international peace

engineers is to now successfully take the criminal economy into account in peace dynamics.

**- The use of armed deterrence.** While the use of force – when it is reflected by atrocities and increased distrust in the state – favours rebel dynamics, it can also be a solution for states when the rebellion has broken out. Thus, the use of air strikes was one of the reasons for the MNJ's disarmament in 2009. Since then, this armed deterrence has even been reinforced by the US and French military presence which is an essential parameter in the risk/benefit analysis of triggering a rebellion. In January 2012, President Amadou Toumani Touré, tried to use the same strategy of deterrence, but the extent of the militant base and the military resources deployed by the MNLA and Ansar Dine, a militant Islamist group, (with support from AQMI) made this strategy meaningless.

**- The repeated call for decentralisation.** In Mali, like in Niger, decentralisation has proceeded through the different rebellions and subsequent peace accords. However, the effectiveness of the link between decentralisation and peace is questionable. Although the process allows for the legitimate emergence (with the population's blessing) of former rebel leaders to posts of responsibility, this process can also be a source of conflict. In Mali, decentralisation has sharpened inter-community tensions and so fuelled a pre-rebellion context. The lower polarisation of tribal identities in Niger partially protects the country from such risks.

**- HACP: an innovative institution.** In some respects, Niger has begun a *peacebuilding* phase, with the HACP being the favoured institutional instrument for peace consolidation. The institution, which was founded in 1995, is the institutional common theme linking the peace process from the first rebellion to today, with the HACP continually redefining its role in terms of the country's security and political priorities. On the contrary, Mali has no similar organisation which has been working for peace consolidation continually since 1990. Institutions founded so far (the Northern Commission and the and -Northern Mali Development Agency) have suffered from a lack of political support or from community instrumentalisation (unlike the HACP) and have declined.

**- Use of militias.** The rebellions in Niger and Mali have been largely destroyed or put down because of internal divisions. However, these divisions have often been encouraged by the Nigerien and Malian states, as the result of strategies that could go as far as state support for the creation of civilian militias. Although such support is a constant feature of Malian poli-

tics in northern Mali, what remains clear however is that Niger has always managed to maintain control of these strategies, benefiting from a context of weaker tribal polarisation than in Mali. Although these strategies for maintaining order in the Sahara with a parastatal force have been effective until recently, they are no longer sufficient. The grey economy (which often justifies possession of a weapon), combined with the sequences of rebellion since 1990, has made access to weapons widespread to all groups, depriving one tribe in particular of the ability to ensure "hegemonic stability."

**- Foreign mediations.** All the rebellions were put down by the intervention of regional mediators who generally have a hidden agenda of satisfying their own national interests. Indeed, Algeria or Libya (before its collapse), which are the interested mediators, are especially concerned with extending their influence in their southern areas. These Algerian or Libyan interventions are largely based on elitist co-optations making it possible to effectively put down rebellions, but which are in many respects destabilising. In the mediation arena, the very heterogeneous international community plays a role which also causes interference.

**- Peace from below.** In a "multi-track" approach, peacemaking involves superimposing regional and micro-local approaches. These put local actors at the heart of decision-making and are intended to settle smaller scale conflicts that peace accords cannot manage. However, these local processes can no longer only be conducted by somewhat weakened traditional leaders. These processes, like what happened at Anefif in September 2015, established the influence of the armed men, as well as their reliance on religious actors who still hold all or part of their legitimacy.

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# Introduction

Up until independence, communities in the Saharan-Sahelian region, particularly in present-day Mali and Niger, occupied territories and developed social, commercial, or cultural proximities or rivalries without much relation to the post-colonial state borders. The political integration of sedentary populations in the state framework of independence was generally smoother than that of the nomadic communities, particularly the Tuaregs. Since independence, in Mali and to a lesser extent in Niger, state power, which has its political and social bases in the southern parts of both these countries, is struggling to establish its legitimacy in the north. It is regularly subject to protests from this area. This opposition is expressed by civil engagement (civil society, involvement in competition of the political parties, etc.) or, more dramatically, by armed struggle (rebellions). Up until now, there has been recurring armed struggle without having necessarily been preceded by non-violent cycles of protest.

However, the central-peripheral geographical divide is not sufficient to explain the rebellions' cyclicity. The respective norths of Niger and Mali are not homogeneous sociological or politically harmonious areas. They are interspersed with internal social stratifications in constant renegotiation, tribal and economic rivalries, or generational tensions. Not everyone is opposed to the central government. Furthermore, the northern periphery does not have the monopoly on violent protest, which, especially in Mali, is spreading to the centre with the emergence of jihadist groups and self-defence organisations. Our approach therefore should not be limited to an analysis of the north-south divide, despite its incontestable structuring power. It will be based on the web of actors at different levels and will examine their political objectives, as well as their modes of operation.

This study is interested in how these sequences of political and security protests are managed by the state, but also by other sub- or supra-state authorities. We are mainly focusing on the recent crises (since the start of the 1990s) and their inclusion in the respective political trajectories of Mali and Niger. Both countries are affected by rebellions and forms of violence which seem fairly similar, but the crises are far from having the same intensity or the same state response, for reasons that we will try to identify.

The document is organised as follows: **the first section** tries to situate our study in the context of peace studies and details our methodological choices. Peacekeeping operations examined in the study are mainly to stop the violent hostilities and to ensure that the mobilisations are put down. Therefore, they come under what is called *peacemaking* in peace engineering. This approach is favoured in the Malian and Nigerien political arenas, at the expense of other more ambitious and longer-term peace consolidation efforts. We also discuss the scales of action for peace, as assessed in the specialist literature, and their relevance to the Nigerien and Malian cases. The **second section** of the document factually recounts the episodes of rebellion which have affected Mali and Niger since their independence. The **third section** revisits each of these protest episodes in a more analytical way in order to understand the logics which guide violent action and to trace its continuation or cessation. Our observation is that there is an increasing complexification of the issues and, therefore, of the possible modalities of controlling them. An attempt at a simple synthesis of the logics of violent action is presented at the end of this section. The **fourth section** assesses the respective policies used for peace in Mali and Niger.

The range of peacemaking methods is broad. Our review discusses the state use of force, as well as non-repressive methods of peacemaking. It also discusses the formal and informal remedies used, expanding the latter, which are also those where scientific literature is weakest. Our observation is the complexification and commodification of peacemaking methods are a reflection of changes in the use of irregular violence described in the section. The **fifth section** concludes.

# I – Peace process and the scale for violent conflicts resolution

This study is mainly empirical, but informs the field of peace studies in at least three ways. Firstly, it questions the ability of the legitimate sequence of "peacemaking/peace consolidation/peacebuilding" to account for the Sahelian realities of controlling violent crises. Secondly, it provides insight into current academic debates about the relevant levels of dialogue to achieve peace, as well as the "hybrid governance" which might result. Finally, on a more normative level, it illustrates the difficulties in establishing legitimate political orders despite taking account of actors considered as legitimate or representative.

## Continuous makeshift peace

In the practical categories of peace engineering, "*peacemaking*" differs significantly from *peace-implementation* and *peacebuilding*. Peacemaking refers to the mediation process leading to the signature of an accord ending a conflict (JENKINS, 2013, p 20). Implementation refers to its consolidation[1]. Finally, peacebuilding is a long-term undertaking that is supposed to result in the participation of all parties to the conflict and to the development of institutions and governance frameworks to prevent crises from recurring (JENKINS, 2013, p 20).

The peace processes in the Sahel are much more about peace making than building over time. This second process, as defined legitimately, has not been completed in either Mali or Niger. The preoccupation with short-term order and stability prevails in both Sahelian states[2]. As we will see further on, the academic division of peace interventions into sequences supposed to follow one another logically does not hold, or not completely,

1. In the context of this study, we will regularly reinforce the importance of peace consolidation, without explicitly referring to *"peace implementation."*

2. These choices echo a broader observation, applicable to the United Nations' peacebuilding model in which order and stability predominate, in line with the expectations of national elites. Such an approach amounts to "consolidating the status quo without driving major change, which is contradictory to the claim of helping to build peace." Béatrice Pouligny, "La 'construction de la paix'", *in AFRI, volume IV,* Centre Thucydide, 2003.

in the Sahel, although this can be substituted with circumstantial (but dedicated) efforts to silence the weapons and prevent mobilisations reforming too quickly. A precarious and makeshift peace is often the result, which consumes time and money, and requires skilful arbitration, according to a logic of bargaining very well described by De Waal (2010) about Sudan. Here, we are able to hypothesise that this patching together demonstrates and maintains a form of low-cost security governance.

This short-termism in resolving conflicts contributes to the recurrence of rebellions (with a rate of rebellion which has been accelerating in Mali since 1963), to the point that it can be considered that the state of low-intensity war in Mali is quasi-permanent. The recurring violence prevents the isolation of the rebellions and the resulting peace policies. Rebellions and state responses are part of the same political sequence. On the one hand, there is not a rebellion which is prepared far from the state's scrutiny, and on the other hand, the state is forced to respond to it with exceptional measures.

Each rebel episode is derived from state policies, which are adjusted to calm tensions while frequently sowing the seeds of the next rebellion. Basically, violence is hence not a derailment of normal political life, but one of its modalities. The subject studied here is not perhaps so much the respective peace policy in Mali and Niger, as the escalation/de-escalation processes of violence in a political arena where violence is instrumental[3].

## Which intermediaries for peace?

Although interventions by third parties in a conflict are almost unanimously considered as effective by econometric studies[4], qualitative studies

3. The crisis initiated in Mali in 2012 may be outside of this model: its scale threatened the very survival of the Malian political system, which was finally saved by foreign intervention. The low-intensity violence which reigned in Mali before this rebellion really seemed at the heart of the functioning of what was called under Amadou Toumani Toure's presidency the "Malian consensus."

4. In real terms, it is statistically proven that the recurrence of conflicts is less in war zones where there has been an intervention by a third party than in war zones which have not hosted a peacekeeping force. Virginia Page Fortna, *Does Peacekeeping Work? Shaping Belligerents' Choices after Civil War*, Princeton University Press, 2008.

lead to more nuanced normative considerations. Third-party interventions must indeed be disaggregated in order to understand their effectiveness better. The practical side of *peacemaking* crucially relies on identifying actors likely to influence the course of events. Anyone involved in mediation must decide whether the approach favours *"track one"* (preferential negotiation with institutional actors), *"track two"* (minor actors who are operationally important) or *"multi-track"* (several levels of simultaneous mediation) options. Peace studies emphasise the need to include local actors and knowledge in peace processes and criticise the likely harm of top-down processes which favour state actors and elites (AUTESSERRE, 2011).

Since the advent of the security/development agenda which coincides roughly with that of human security from the second half of the 1990s, security considerations have been questioning the state's role. Considering security as a legitimate expectation of the people implies that the state is not perhaps the only source for setting security priorities (LUCKHAM, 2015). Building on this reasoning also implies that in practical terms the state is not the sole actor in security governance. It can also be accompanied by (or coupled with), from top-down, supranational, bilateral, or multi-lateral tutelage or interference, and from bottom-up, by local authorities (traditional, religious, NGOs, etc.) Although the overwhelming intervention of international organisations is often discredited for its doubtful legitimacy, "local" has become the dominant intellectual outlook in peace studies.

Although the consideration of local and micro-local interests is crucial in the search for peace, our study tempers this enthusiasm[5]. We are not making the local element the ultimate key to resolving conflicts. There is no reason to suppose *a priori* that communities have adequate diplomatic resources to control conflicts for at least two reasons. Firstly, the "local" element is interspersed with tensions and conflicts, sometimes of long-standing without an immediate solution, and can be represented by people with a lack of legitimacy. Secondly, the dynamics of local conflicts are themselves very sensitive to the dynamics of more encompassing divisions: state, cross-border, mafia, etc.

5. See Roger Mac Ginty and Oliver Richmond, "The Fallacy of Constructing Hybrid Political Orders: a Reappraisal of the Hybrid Turn in Peacebuilding", *International Peacekeeping*, 23:2, 2016.

Promoting peace is therefore not only addressing the "right" local actors ("women", "young people", "community leaders"), but it is understanding how they fit into the nested conflicts and unravelling the challenges and motivations for their participation or non-participation. These institutional entanglements and their political economy, leading to types of "hybrid" security governance (BAGAYOKO et al., 2016), can be competitive or co-operative, long-term or not, transparent or opaque. In practical terms, finding the right balance between the interests of all these actors is undoubtedly the key to peace in the Sahel.

The Sahelian area is a particularly fertile field to observe these tangled dynamics. The local, regional, national and international issues are closely intertwined and shape the dynamics of peacebuilding and peace consolidation, and with it that of the state. All categories of actors must be taken into account – non-state actors (armed groups, religious groups and civil society), state actors, regional actors and international actors - to lead to a *"multi-track"* type approach. Each peace process in Mali and Niger since 1990 has seen these different actors interfere. Algeria and Libya have always been involved in managing regional mediations, either by being asked, or by imposing themselves because of their close (or even collaborative) links with the armed groups. The short-term motivations which drive these states, make them strong partners "to make peace", but less to build it in the long term, as is demonstrated by the volatility of the commitments made, illustrated not least by the lack of application of the various peace accords concluded in Algeria since 1991. These regional processes, which have been conducted more or less harmoniously with the states involved, have frequently been coupled with smaller, mostly informal dynamics, responsible for translating the general terms, formulated by the agreements ratified at the higher level of mediation, locally. This is the case, as we will see in detail further on, for the Bourem process in 1994 and the Anefif process in 2015, each of which marked the end of (very temporarily in the case of Anefif) episodes of rebellion in Mali.

## Legitimacy of the peace processes

Even if the levels of intervention are appropriately identified, nothing guarantees that the process set in motion will be converted into legitimacy on the ground. This study aims to understand, in a comparative perspective, the state and parastatal modalities for managing security alerts and

crises, while evaluating more speculatively, how these modalities contribute to building the state. Legitimacy can be built in two directions: by gaining recognition from domestic populations (internal legitimacy) or from the international community (external legitimacy). In the specific case of so-called "fragile" states, which include Mali and Niger according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)[6], legitimacy can be expressed through actors with no institutional existence, but acting on behalf of the state with its approval. This is the case for pro-government militias. We call these actors "parastatal". Armed or unarmed non-state actors (for example traditional leaders) may also enjoy greater or lesser legitimacy (CLEMENTS, 2014). The legitimacy is *in fine* a more empirical than theoretical matter, extremely sensitive to the context and therefore intrinsically volatile and to being continuously rebuilt.

In order to "manufacture" legitimacy in the Sahel, like in many other places, the international community prefers an institutional ready-made policy in the form of elections or decentralisation, rather than the patient development of consensual local institutions. Nevertheless, legitimacy created in this way is exclusively external. It enables diplomacy and international aid to resume their routine, but not necessarily to reconcile a weakened domestic social fabric. As we will show further on, the states nevertheless supplement the formal institutional arsenal with effective informal methods.

## Study methodology

The empirical work, which our observations are based on, refers to several episodes of political violence in Mali and Niger. These are not chosen to test an existing theory, but for exploratory purposes. The main criterion for their selection is that they correspond to very recent conflict sequences (since the last rebellion in Mali in 2012): it is the current political interactions which interest us. Among other cases, we will analyse the conflict between the Fulani and the Dawsahak on the Niger-Malian border, the developing conflict in the Mopti region, or even the creation of the Collective for Renewal and Innovation (CRI) in Niger and the National Movement for Azawad (MNA) in Mali.

6. OCDE, "States of Fragility 2015, Meeting post-2015 Ambitions", 26 March 2015.

This study draws on existing literature on peace studies and the Tuareg rebellions in Niger and Mali. The latter category of literature, which is plentiful in the disciplines of sociology or history, struggles to explain the complexity of contemporary dynamics. The study is therefore mainly based on two field missions in Niger (May and June 2016) and one in Mali (May 2016). Most of these field missions were carried out in the capitals for obvious security reasons, but however a trip to Agadez was made (February 2016). More than 50 interviews were conducted on these occasions, mainly with actors who had or still have a role related to these rebellions: rebels, traders or actors in the grey economy[7], civil servants, tribal leaders and ministers. We include in these studies empirical material collected in other fields[8] conducted since the start of the 2000s and which is useful for the issue being dealt with here.

7. We have kept the term grey economy to encompass smuggling and trafficking activities to avoid any moral judgement on the people involved. Furthermore, we preferred this term to that of organised crime, as on the one hand, the political economy that we are talking about seems to include much more than criminal interests, and on the other hand organised crime assumes a level of organisation and division of labour which can be found in the Sahel, but in a non-systematic way. The term trafficking has been used sometimes when, for the purposes of the study, we explicitly refer to drug trafficking, which is currently most lucrative in the Sahel.

8. Conducted in both countries and in other states in the region.

# II – Niger-Mali: rebel trajectories compared

This section identifies the study subject by setting out in broad terms the recurring rebel episodes in the Malian and Nigerien peripheries. These episodes and some of their empirical characteristics are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Tuareg rebellions in Mali and Niger

| **Start of the rebellion** | **Original movement** | **Leaders** | **Demands** | **Outcome** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1916 (Mali) | ---------- | Fihroun | Not formalized. Expulsion of French occupier, jihad | Military defeat |
| 1917 (Niger) | ---------- | Ag Mohammed Kaocen | Not formalized. Expulsion of French occupier, jihad | Military defeat |
| 1963 (Mali) | Alfellaga | Zeyd Ag Attaher | Not formalized. Rejection of Malian authority over Kidal | Military defeat |
| 1990 (Mali) | MPLA | Iyad Ag Ghaly | Autonomy for northern Mali. Reduced Malian military presence in the north. | Peace accord, fragmentation of the rebel movements, community violence |
| 1991 (Niger) | FLAA | Rhissa Ag Boula<br>Mano Dayak<br>Mohamed Anacko | Autonomy. Formalized in 1994 with the Framework Programme for Resistance. | Peace accords, dispersal of the rebel movements |
| 2006 (Mali) | ADC | Hassan Fagaga<br>Ibrahim Ag Bahanga | Implementation of the 1991 National Pact[9]; integration of fighters. | Peace accords, reactivation of community militias |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2007 (Niger) | MNJ | Aghaly Alambo<br>Mohamed Acharif | Implementation of the 1995 Peace Accord: acceleration of decentralisation[10]; regional distribution of the uranium revenue; integration. | Military defeat, break-up of the movement, disarmament |
| 2012 (Mali) | MNLA<br>Ansar Dine | Bilal Ag Acherif<br>Iyad Ag Ghaly | Independence of Azawad.<br>Establishment of a theocratic state in Mali. | Peace accord, dispersal of the rebel movements, community violence |

Niger and Mali are both geographically divided between a south where political power is concentrated - and therefore held by political elites from the majority communities (Malinke, Bambara, Fulani in Mali – Zarma, Hausa in Niger) -, and a Saharan north far from its south, both geographically in Mali (with the Niger river cutting the country in two), economically[11] and from an identity point of view[12]. This division is the model for the emancipatory discourse driven by the successive rebellions in Mali and Niger up until today.

Religiously motivated revolts with support from marabouts had been breaking out in West Africa as early as 1916, particularly in Mali and Niger. In Mali, Fihroun attacked the French occupier in the Menaka region, before six months later, Kaocen launched a long revolt against colonial forces in the Aïr region with the support of the Libyan Senoussi brotherhood (FUGLESTAD, 1973). These anti-colonial revolts were not specific to Niger and Mali, they affected many West African countries (Senegal, Libya, Algeria, etc.). However, they demonstrate a characteristic which

9. See the ADC's website.

10. See Ferdaous Bouhlel-Hardy, Yvan Guichaoua and Abdoulaye Tamboura, "Crises touarègues au Niger et au Mali Janvier 2008", Seminar on 27 November 2007, IFRI, January 2008.

11. That is to say poorly integrated in the transport networks and the national commercial networks.

12. With very polarised ethnic/tribal identities between north and south.

continues in subsequent rebellions, namely the difficulty for the initiators of the rebellions to unite beyond their original community: Fihroun was Ouillimiden; Kaocen was Ikazkazen and they hardly recruited beyond Aïr (DEYCARD, 2011). The rebellions certainly challenged the colonial authority, but were part of a complex local political competition, which reshuffled the deck.

The border division, which originated from internal arbitrations in the French colonial administration, was maintained by the newly independent states in 1960. It formed what the rebels criticised as a "people trap", in both Mali and Niger[13]. Neither of these populations were in fact prepared for an independence which placed them de facto under the tutelage of a state which they did not know or scarcely knew, whose political centre was very far away, and only two years after the announcement of the establishment of the Common Organisation of the Saharan Regions (OCRS)[14]. This lack of knowledge of the other and the resulting distrust played a significant part in the outbreak of the first rebellion in Mali. For the historian, Pierre Boilley, "the history of the rebellions arose from a misunderstanding," (BOILLEY, 2013).

In Mali, as early as 1963, an extremely localised revolt broke out in the north of the Kidal region following a *rezzou*[15] perpetrated against two goumiers[16] from the Malian government, resulting in a very violent response by the Malian army. This first rebellion was widely documented (LECOCQ 2010; BOILLEY 2013). Unlike subsequent rebellions, it was improvised and did not include any clear demands (LECOCQ 2010, p. 156). It has left a pain-

13. On this subject, Camille Lefebvre contests the validity of the recurring accusation of a strictly arbitrary division of the borders, in contradiction with the relevant local political groupings. See Camille Lefebvre, *Frontières de sable, frontières de papier,* Publications de la Sorbonne, 2015.

14. It should be noted that in 1958 and 1960, respectively in Mali and Niger, letters and petitions by prominent Tuaregs and Arabs, including the qadi of Timbuktu, were signed and sent to General de Gaulle to request the incorporation of their communities into the French Sahara. See Frédéric Deycard, *Les rébellions touarègues du Niger: combattants, mobilisations et culture politique*, Institut d'études politiques de Bordeaux, 2011, p. 147.

15. A rezzou is a fast attack intended to plunder the opponent.

16. In the Sahel, goumiers were Sahelian natives, generally meharists (camel troopers), responsible for intelligence and the control and arbitration of local conflicts for the benefit of the colonial administration.

ful memory-based legacy, which has never been repaired and is symbolised by a few figures of southern terror like the "Butcher of Kidal"[17] which continue to feed the imagination of the Kidal population and even more widely of the Tuareg communities of Timbuktu and Gao. Amidou Mariko's testimony (MARIKO, 2001), when he was a sergeant in the Malian army in 1963, is enlightening. This memory-based legacy is one of the psychological triggers of the rebellions.

The 1990 rebellion was a direct legacy of the 1963 one. Its base was established in the late 1970s by three of the four leaders of the 1963 rebellion, who were refugees in Algeria, before Iyad Ag Ghaly came to take over the defence of the cause. Even today, many Malian rebels place their political trajectory in keeping with the events of 1963, not only symbolically, but because their parents paid for this conflict with their lives. The common thread linking 1963 with 2016 is undeniably Elladi Ag Alla, son of an anti-colonial "social bandit" (BOILLEY 2013) and leader of the 1963 rebellion, who still today unswervingly supports Iyad Ag Ghaly.

Many Malian Tuaregs, particularly in the Kidal region, inherit a protest culture from a very early age, built around glorious narratives or, on the contrary, tales of crimes and oppressions endured, which are passed down from generation to generation. From a methodological point of view, it is difficult to argue that this memory-based legacy is more rooted in Mali than in Niger, but the hypothesis is not unrealistic, mainly because of the greater extent of military or community violence in Mali than in Niger.

Nevertheless, the rebels' political culture underwent a major shift between 1963 and the 1990s: the forefront of the 1990s rebellion was made up of exiles who adopted, particularly in Libya, an egalitarian, quasi-socialist world view, rejecting the identity conservatism of the past and distancing itself from the traditional leadership (LECOCQ, 2010). This new political culture was driven by the figure of the *achamor*[18] (*ishumar* in the plural) and was particularly spread by the powerful medium of the music of groups such as *Tinariwen* or *Takrist Nakal* whose cassettes passed from hand to hand in the desert (BELLALIMAT, 2003).

17. He was a Captain in the Malian army, Diby Sillas Diarra, held responsible for atrocities committed in 1964. See Pierre Boilley, "La révolte oubliée des insurgés de Kidal", *Alternatives Internationales* 059, June 2013.

18. The term is constructed from the French word "chômeur" (unemployed) which corresponds to the precarious status of young Tuareg exiles in Libya or Algeria.

In Niger, the greater proximity between the northern and southern elites helped to prevent the scenario of the Malian rebellion in 1963. The post-independence Nigerien authorities opted for an inclusive solution, symbolized by the creation in December 1960 of the Ministry of Saharan and Nomadic Affairs, located at Agadez and which was directed by a Tuareg in the person of Mouddour Zakara. This choice by the Nigerien President, Diori Hamani, allowed the Tuaregs in Niger to engage in patronage networks providing them with many administrative and financial advantages. However, this policy was reversed with the coming to power of General Seyni Kountché as a result of the coup of 15 April 1974. In particular, during the repression following the attempted coup in March 1976 involving two Tuaregs, the General engaged in a political purge forcing the Tuaregs into exile in Libya. He also abolished the Ministry of Saharan and Nomadic Affairs, and following the example of the Malian President, Moussa Traoré, moved away from the meharist model[19] in force in northern Niger for a much more centralised military administration. The departure of President Kountché in 1987 eased relations with the exiled Tuaregs in Libya and his successor, Ali Saibou, invited the latter to return to participate in the National Conference.

This sequence of relaxation deteriorated from the Tchintabaraden incident in May 1990. As of 1985, in the aftermath of a very severe drought in 1984, clashes between young *Ishumar* refugees in the Tchintabaraden camp and the Nigerien armed forces resulted in several deaths.

Several thousand *Ishumar* continued to return from Algeria and Libya from 1987 to 1990, at President Ali Saibou's invitation, in exchange for help with their reintegration. This never happened and resentment continuously increased[20]. In 1990, a series of isolated attacks against representatives of the Nigerien state and violent reprisals by the Nigerien army created a climate of extreme tension. In May, the prison, sub-prefecture and police

19. A meharist is originally a person who rode a camel. The meharist model which was used in the Sahara at the initiative of colonial administrators, was therefore based on camel companies ridden by armed nomads.

20. "Les promesses d'Ali Saibou ne furent malheureusement pas tenues faute de moyens matériels et financiers, sans doute plus que par négligence coupable" ("Ali Saibou's promises were unfortunately not kept due to a lack of material and financial resources, undoubtedly more than through culpable negligence") *in* Emmanuel Grégoire, "Niger: un État à forte teneur en uranium", *Hérodote n° 142,* 2011, p. 206-225.

station at Tchintabaraden were attacked by assailants to obtain the release of *Ishumar* arrested in the previous weeks. It would be followed by a very heavy crackdown by the Nigerien armed forces (GREGOIRE, 2011). The handling by the Nigerien authorities, of what would later be considered as a "massacre" by observers, accelerated the outbreak of a rebellion already in the making by Nigerien Tuaregs who had returned from Libya. Like Mali, which is still dealing with the consequences of the trauma of 1963, Niger must deal with the original crime of Tchintabaraden which plays a fundamental role in mobilising memories and discourse. The figures of Kaocen and Mano Dayak are raised up as resistance heroes.

In the same period, Mali and Niger simultaneously experienced their second and first Tuareg rebellions. Launched by single movements, the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Azawad) in Mali and the FPLN (Popular Front for the Liberation of Niger) in Niger, they rapidly disintegrated because of political, personal or tribal rivalries, skilfully used by the state authorities. The movements fragmented, with some groups supporting the peace accords being criticised by others resulting from the splits.

From 1995 in Niger and 1996 in Mali, the official dates of the end of these rebellions, until the mid-2000s, the frustration among the rebel armed groups stemming from not or hardly seeing the accords implemented, gradually threatened the peace. In each one of these countries, several more or less serious skirmishes between former rebels and the security forces revealed the precariousness of the peace process. Contained on a piecemeal basis by granting benefits in kind (development project, creation of communes, political appointments, etc.), this discontent resulted in the outbreak of new sequences of rebellion. The expression "residual banditry" is routinely used by the local authorities and media to conceal the chronic security instability in the north (DEYCARD, 2011).

The May 23, 2006 Democratic Alliance for Change (ADC) relaunched the rebellion in Mali in 2006, a rebellion which can be said to have never been really put down until its revival in another form in 2011. Indeed, the figure behind the 2006 rebellion, Ibrahim Ag Bahanga, never disarmed until his death in August 2011. In the meantime, since his Libyan exile which began in 2009, he moved closer to the emerging, separatist student movement, the MNA, to plan a new rebellion whose leadership was promised to him. The merger of the MNA and Bahanga's forces formed the nucleus of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), to which were aggregated forces from diverse Tuareg communities and

"returnees" from Libya (particularly around Colonel Mohamed Ag Najim). Although it has been said that Ibrahim Ag Bahanga's goal was to negotiate his return peacefully with President Amadou Toumani Touré[21], his death hastened matters. The MNLA initiated hostilities against the Malian state from January 2012 and in partnership with three jihadist movements[22], chased the Malian army from Azawad, before quickly being ousted by these same movements.

In Niger, in 2007, the MNJ revived the violent political protest following the dissatisfaction of former rebel officers in the 1990s, but laid down its arms in 2009 after a final military defeat. The peace is still holding today.

We now need to understand the changing foundations of the choices of recourse to violent action by these different acts of mobilisation, in order to be able to analyse the remedy activated in the following section of this document to enable the de-escalation of violence and, *in fine*, modalities of peacebuilding in these countries.

21. Interview with his envoy in Bamako in 2011, Bamako, May 2016.

22. Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQMI), Ansar Dine and the Movement for the Oneness of Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO). The degree of co-ordination between the MNLA and the jihadist movements during the 2012 offensive remains a great and highly sensitive unknown in this crisis.

# III - Transformation of logics of violent protest

## Factors and resources of violent collective dynamics

Understanding how peace is achieved in the Sahel first and foremost requires a grasp of the complexity of the rebels' engagement process. This section is therefore dedicated to the armed movements' formation modalities which are multiple and changing.

As specified in the first section, the rebels' strategic decisions and choices are not developed in a political vacuum, according to a sequence which would see the rebels planning their organisation and then the state responding by various methods, violent or not, in compliance with the divisions of peace studies: insurgency, counter-insurgency, peaceful resolution, post-conflict, etc. The rebels operate in specific political environments moulded by state actors among others. However, beyond the relationship with the state, the start of a rebel sequence results from a series of interactions with regional and international states or existing non-state actors (religious actors and other existing armed groups). This interactive aspect is essential in understanding the dynamics of rebel engagement.

Finally, far from being uniform and on a micro-political scale, violent mobilisations are always the result of an aggregation of vested interests, personal motivations, and multiple and heterogeneous resources, combined with particular event sequences (political or geopolitical), likely to hasten its implementation. We see rebellion as the gradual (and not necessarily planned) pooling of various types of resources, which temporarily gives rise to violent political configuration.

Identifying the causes and attempting to put them in order analytically is an essential exercise in understanding the determinants of rebel engagement. It is a prerequisite for understanding the conflict resolution mechanisms detailed in section 4.

This analytical study is based on the categorisation of a certain number of variables allowing the factors of violent mobilisation and war dynamics to be assessed. These variables either relate to ideological motivations

(the nature of the mobilised ideological repertoire) or external factors (clear foreign support possibly also of an ideological nature).

A third variable, which partly depends on the previous two, corresponds to the extent of the social base that the rebellion has.

The ideological repertoire includes world views, a sense of justice, or important normative principles that carry the rebellion along. These intellectual mechanisms can be drawn from different sources. They can have a cultural base (e.g. codes of honour and war communicated by the Tuareg communities), be specifically tailored and spread by the rebel leaders for nationalist reasons (e.g. demand for autonomy or sharing mining resources), or stem from a religious doctrine (e.g. jihad). It goes without saying that the ideological orientation of a rebellion partly determines its ability to mobilise the population and frames how it can be approached with a view to conflict resolution. We will see that a certain number of factual elements foster this ideological repertoire: recurring mismanagement of droughts, partial compliance by the state with its commitments, etc.

External resources can influence whether a rebellion breaks out or not. The Sahara is a highly connected area and many actors are attracted to the issues within it. We differentiate among them strategic resources, such as a realistic approach to international relations (e.g. French influence versus Algerian influence; Algerian influence versus Libyan or Moroccan influence; establishment of foreign terrorist groups, etc.) and commercial economic resources (e.g. control of cross-border trafficking). These resources not only play a triggering role, but they contribute to a large extent to the means available in order for a rebellion to continue.

The extent of the social base which the supports the group partly results from the first two variables, as well as shaping them: the base may be broad if the rebellion is well equipped, just as the rebellion can be well equipped if a lot of people extend credit to it[23]. The scale of the base also plays a critical role in the group's ability to formulate its demands and to choose or not choose the repertoire of violence in a credible way. Its scale, but also how its rank and file fighters and leaders are integrated with each other, is a good indication of its future trajectory. For example, as demonstrated by Staniland (2014), a small close-knit group can last over time despite a limited political impact; a movement with a broad, but heteroge-

23. The MNLA has thus benefited from financial sacrifices by Dawsahak livestock owners (interview with a Dawsahak leader, Niamey, June 2016).

neous social base can have a strong political impact but rapidly disintegrate; while organisations led by charismatic leaders may not survive the death of their leader, etc. These varied characteristics broadly shape the rebellion, influencing its outcome and also forming as many more or less effective possible responses by the state.

These different approaches help us to analytically account for the violent episodes detailed in section 2, in order to reproduce both what promotes their outbreak (factors) and what defines their nature (resources). We propose here a new interpretation of these episodes (with the intrinsic limitations of such an exercise[24]), which accounts for the changes in violent engagement in Mali and Niger.

## Ideological resources

### *Separatist repertoire*

The protester-separatist repertoire is most evident out of those voiced by successive rebellions. Whether it is the rebellions of 1990 or 2007 in Niger, or 1963, 1990, 2006 or 2011 in Mali, the nationalist demands have always been the reason cited for the different rebel groups' engagement with the almost unattainable prospect of independence. This repertoire is highly strategic, because it is the one that the international community has access to through formal platforms, interprets and which it attaches importance to. It is in this sense that we must understand the parallels continuously established by the political actors of the rebellion with more or less similar political configurations elsewhere. Thus, the leaders of the MNLA have often defended the legitimacy of their engagement like that of

24. We are faced with the difficulty of an imbalance of sources: recent episodes are better known than older ones. Especially as, modalities of collecting information differ from one episode to the next. Today's researcher has other intentions in mind than the early 20th century colonist, whose reports foster historical studies relating to the first rebellions. This methodological hurdle leads us to temper the certainties that can be formulated about the occurrences studied and constitutes a limitation to the exercise which we are engaged in.

the Kurds in Iraq[25] – strongly supported by the international community -, or South Sudan, or even by citing their status as an indigenous people[26].

Yet, none of these rebellions has been able to obtain satisfaction. In the absence of independence, which is always claimed but never considered in the peace negotiations because of the attachment of regional and international powers to the divisions inherited from the Berlin Conference[27], the groups have called for a rebalancing of the governance systems in both states in favour of their northern parts. Socio-economic marginalisation, exclusion from decision-making processes and under-representation in the security forces have constantly been criticised by these groups.

The resulting demands have generally focused on: the nature of the system of territorial organisation in order to rebalance the country's governance system – ranging from pursuit of decentralisation to self-determination or independence –; the representation of Tuareg minorities within the state apparatus – leading to recruitment processes in the civil service and to integration or reintegration in the national security forces; socio-economic investments by the states in their northern parts – leading to commitments on public expenditure and infrastructure projects; more balanced arbitration in terms of access to natural resources (water and pastures, etc.). Many studies have highlighted the under-development of the northern parts of both countries (not to be confused with the standard of living of their populations)[28], which is reflected by a lack of infrastructure, under-representation in the state and associated public services, while climate vulnerability[29] of the populations in these areas has increased compared to other regions.

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25. Interview with one of the MNLA leaders, Paris, May 2014.

26. See, for example, the MNLA's Declaration of Independence dated 4 April 2012, which explicitly draws on the United Nations' Charter and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

27. The Berlin Conference, which was held in 1884 and 1885, was dedicated to the division and partition of Africa by the European powers.

28. Existing macroeconomic indicators show that in terms of purchasing power, the standards of living of the northern and southern populations are broadly similar. See Mathieu Pellerin, Étude *des fragilités structurelles au nord du Mali*, World Bank, 2013.

29. The recurring droughts in the Saharan belt, to which more regular flooding can be now added.

The assessment of the commitments made by the states of Niger and Mali in compliance with the various peace accords appears more nuanced. An analysis of decentralisation both in Niger and Mali, for example, leads to mixed results (see section 4), so much so that it no longer constitutes the "magic remedy" for peace processes. Indeed, decentralisation, which has been broken down in Mali since the end of Alpha Oumar Konaré's regime and the departure of the Minister for Decentralisation, Ousmane Sy in 1994, is widely discredited among the rebel groups[30]. The authorities are in fact obliged to go beyond this concept of territorial planning a priori adapted to the socio-economic realities of Sahelian societies (scarce resources in the north and under-education of northern actors) in favour of regionalisation or even federalism. In Niger, regionalisation - thought to be a solution to the 2007 MNJ rebellion - is far from being effective as the presidents of the regional councils, although set up in 2010 under open elections, complain that their prerogatives are undermined by the governors and central government[31].

The relativity of the efforts agreed upon by the Nigerien and Malian states is such that the discourse of struggle against injustice and the historic marginalisation of the Tuareg communities is prevalent and constitutes a pool for recruitment and mobilisation. The MNJ's rebellion has demonstrated the ability to mobilise around this nationalist demand[32], while the example of the MNA (which then became the MNLA) in Mali shows that the young Tuareg generation has appropriated this discourse, with as much if not more, vehemence than their elders[33]. This vengeful youth also exists in northern Niger. It should be recalled in particular that Nigeriens and Libyans are also among the founders of the MNA[34].

30. Interview with several leaders from the CMA (Co-ordination of Azawad Movements) and the Platform, Bamako, June 2015 and May 2016.

31. Interviews with two regional council presidents, Niamey, May 2016.

32. Interview with a former MNJ leader, Agadez, January 2016.

33. Interviews with five founding members of the MNA, Bamako, Paris, Nouakchott, Niamey, 2012-2016.

34. Interview with a Nigerien founding representative of the MNA, Niamey, May 2016.

This explicit ideological mobilisation (which is opportunely combined with ecological[35] and anti-terrorist[36]arguments) is essential for the group to be taken seriously locally, nationally, and internationally, but may simultaneously conceal other logics of mobilisation. This co-existence of different logics even within a rebel group which is homogeneous and united in its demands can explain the difficulties that states have in responding to it. We will see afterwards that religious, economic, or community/tribal mobilisations can thus strongly compete with this ideological content and weaken the group's coherence.

## *Cultural repertoire: Saharan figures of success through political violence*

The figure of the rebel or the former rebel remains highly valued in some segments of these nomadic societies, as well as with their foreign partners. So, it is a mobilisation lever which is difficult to assess accurately.

Taking up arms may be seen as a means of "renegotiating their social status through resistance movements" (DEBOS, 2013). This figure especially constitutes social success because it is associated with justice (fairness of judgement, protection of communities, financial redistribution, etc.) referring to the trajectory of the "social bandit" theorised by Hobsbawm (1959) or to the "bandit of honour" associated with the Corsican vendetta (PARSI, 2015). In addition, "emerging" (taking up arms) can represent, depending on the context, a mainly masculine modality of generational assertion[37]. The rebel trajectory is in many ways still a rite of passage, mandatory to being legitimate in Aïr or Adrar des Ifoghas. Thus, Yvan Guichaoua explains the rallying of the *Neo-Ishumars* (those who left Niger for Libya in the early 2000s) to the MNJ through the willingness of this under-employed youth

35. See also, Frédéric Deycard *op. cit* on the use of opposition to uranium mining by the MNJ with a view to ensuring intermediaries among the western NGOs.

36. The notable example of the ADC, which fought the GSPC (Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat) at the end of 2006, or the MNLA when it was founded in 2011 to win over the international community.

37. Women are far from passive in this process. A number of interviews with ex-fighters highlight the encouragement given by their sisters, mothers, wives, or even challenges to their bravery.

to exist politically and compete with their elders, particularly following the murders committed by the army against Tuareg civilians (GUICHAOUA, 2012). The warlike figure of the Tuareg fighter seeking to avenge his tainted honour[38] is regularly cited by the mobilised youth, but obviously does not exhaust the justification repertoires used by one individual to another or over time.

The legitimation figures also change according to the evolution of the cycles of rebellion and their contents. Hence, the rise of the grey economy is promoting a new figure. Saley Boss is a good personification of this. A famous drug convoy road blocker, his character appears as an avenger to protect or financially help the neediest, particularly those in his community, the Kel Ewey from Timia[39]. Hama Mossa, a trafficker from the Taghat Malet tribe in Mali[40], is an eminently respected person in his home community (for among other things, due to health investments made) and in this sense, an undeniable source of inspiration. Since it is understood that many of these traffickers are engaged in rebellion (Saley Boss for a time with the MNJ and Hama Mossa in the MNLA in 2012), it is the rebel figure which is valued at the same time.

Similarly, the revitalisation of Islam in the Sahel is also transforming the image and perception of the rebel. The pious rebel has become a respected figure, and this figure, as paradoxical as it may seem, may even be combined with that of the rebel drug trafficker (still *haram* forbidden)[41]. So, it is a drug trafficker who finances the building of a mosque or a reli-

38. This image is taken to extremes by the ultra-caricatural Italian film Tuareg: the Desert Warrior (see on Dailymotion).

39. Interview with several young Tuaregs, Agadez, January 2016.

40. See the Wikileaks cables about him and his responsibility in drug trafficking mentioned.

41. From a theological point of view, the ulamas in Afghanistan issued a fatwa in the 1980s making the production or sale of drugs legal (halal), since this drug does not affect Muslim populations. Interview with an official from the ONUDC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), Dakar, November 2015. During an interview with a Mauritian journalist, Isslemou Ould Moustapha Ould Salihi, the latter told us that many Salafists imprisoned in Mauritania after having "been involved in" in drug trafficking, were adapting it religiously. A jihadist interpretation of this fatwa means that the drug becomes a weapon when it is intended for use by unbelievers. Interview with Isselmou Ould Moustapha Ould Salihi, Nouakchott, March 2014.

gious festival in northern Mali[42]. This social value, far from being only symbolic, is mainly because these influential actors provide funds, protection, or even services (medical care, mining, etc.) within a political economy of the rebellion.

The fact that the figure of the rebel is highly valued and constitutes a factor for engaging in rebellion is a serious obstacle in the search for peace. As a rebound effect, those who have left the world of rebellion to integrate in the institutional process struggle to retain their legitimacy with the base. Accused of having "betrayed" the cause, having sold "their own" or having misappropriated the "peace dividends", they are supplanted in the collective imagination by these new figures of success. This is particularly the case in Mali, where against a background of extreme tension, the "former rebels" who retain their legitimacy with the younger generation are extremely rare, but also in Niger where their integration in the system reduces their popularity in the north, although some have managed to escape such disqualification[43].

This figure of the Tuareg rebel does not only produce effects at the local level of mobilisation. Internationally, the reputation of the fearless meharist fighter which continues to be associated with the Tuaregs, is also a pool of resources for western, and particularly French actors. There is no lack of past examples (see section 4) to support this idea, but this image still persists today, whether it is members of a French parliamentary commission supporting the idea that by bringing together all the Tuaregs in Algeria, Libya, Mali and Niger[44], a shared destiny could be supported, or a former senior French official meeting informally with the "Tuareg leaders" from the four countries mentioned above to restore the meharist militias in 2013[45]. Yet, for the reasons mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, this clichéd image is particularly undermined by the development of the grey economy, whose actors are among those same fantasised heroes, and of jihadism which the Tuaregs are increasingly involved in. This distortion of the image of the "Blue Men" abroad produces disappointments just as

42. Interview with an Arab-Tuareg trader from Kidal, Bamako, May 2014.

43. Interview on this subject with several young Tuareg leaders, Agadez, January 2016.

44. Interview of one of the members of the research team, Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee, 2013, Paris.

45. Personal observations of one of the members of the research team.

unfounded as were the previous representations, with some western military being "disappointed" and developing the idea that the Tuaregs are no longer trusted actors, because they are too committed to terrorism[46].

## *Religious repertoire: the place of Islam in the mobilisation and positioning vis-à-vis contemporary jihadist movements*

The question of the relationship of the rebellions with Islam can be considered from two angles. The first concerns the Islamic reference in the rebellion's own rhetoric; the second is more pragmatic and strategic: recently autonomy movements have been overwhelmed with armed competitors explicitly calling for jihad. How, then, do they position themselves faced with this new situation?

It would be wrong to consider that the religion has an entirely new place in the political and security dynamics of the Sahel. Already in the 19th century, Cheikhou Amadou's Fulani Masina empire and El Hadj Umar Tall's Toucouleur empire declared jihad and established theocratic empires in present-day Mali. Fihroun in 1916, then Kaocen in Niger, both fought the French coloniser in the name of jihad pronounced by the marabouts. Among the rebel armed groups, the Arab Islamic Front of Azawad (FIAA) in the 1990s, and then the ADC in 2006, claimed an Islamic identity. Finally, the Islamic referent in the context of armed movements in the Sahel is far from being an exception.

Nevertheless, the Islam which inspires the mobilisations is not immutable. Its return to the forefront in rebellions in the 2000s follows the success in Gao and especially Kidal of the pietist (non-violent) preaching movement *Jamaat Tabligh*.

However, as Ferdaous Bouhlel points out (BOUHLEL-HARDY et al., 2009), if religion allows for a relegitimation of actors of political violence (as is the case for Ibrahmin Bahanga and his men), it is not its principle. Islam remains an active source for decisions made without being at the forefront of the agenda of separatist rebellions (that only naive foreign observers consider as "secular"). In 2012, foreign intervention and personal quarrels, more than the content, were needed to finally prevent a MNLA – Ansar Dine rapprochement from happening, with the enforcement of sharia as a point of consensus. The exact role of influential Islamic

46. Personal interviews with western military personnel, Paris, 2015.

scholars and judges and theological debates (for example to identify the enemy, to define alliances, decide the degree of co-operation with foreign forces) even within the separatist demand requires investigations which exceed the aim of this study. It should be noted that this study is not facilitated by the de facto supervision of rebel movements by the international forces (France and MINUSMA), who are also fighting the jihadist forces at the same time. Any reference to Islam then becomes suspicious, likely resulting in the strategic suppression of this issue by the rebel coalition.

The revitalisation of Islam in northern Mali questions the possible development of the nature of rebellions, as armed protest against the existing government is condemned by Islamic jurisprudence, considered as being *bidaa* (falling under innovation)[47]. An in-depth study on this issue would enable Islam to be considered from a more integrative perspective. Doubtlessly, therefore the armed movements which are formed in the Sahel will be modified, with Islam forming an increasingly significant marker of identity. During the negotiations in Algiers, a meeting in July 2015 thus saw the General Secretary of HCUA (High Council for the Unity of Azawad) demanding the enforcement of sharia law in northern Mali. Similarly, although the Islamic referents are marginal in the final text of the Algiers Accords, the role of the Islamic judges (*qadis*) is however set to be reinforced.

This revived Islamic religiosity, which was non-violent up to 2012, has however partly descended into violence with the foundation of Ansar Dine at the start of the rebellion. We will discuss in the external factors how offensive jihad, originally imported from abroad, has gradually taken hold in northern Mali.

47. Interview with an HCUA leader, Bamako, May 2016.

## Strategic foreign and financial interference

### *Diplomatic interference*

Mali and Niger are surrounded by states, for which the northern parts of these two countries form a strategic extension. Furthermore, these states do not maintain good relations with Mali and Niger. The rebellions in Mali and in Niger are not directly provoked by these neighbouring countries, but when they are being prepared or exist, they open up opportunities for each of them to advance their agenda at the expense of their neighbours.

Since independence, Algeria and Libya have observed and acted on the dynamics involving the Tuareg communities (BOILLEY, 2011), while Mauritania and Morocco are now conducting a more active policy in the Sahelian area. Although, as we will see in the next section, no peace process could be completed without Algeria or Libya's involvement, their role exceeds that of mere mediator. Interference by these states in Sahelian affairs is based on the influence of actors in northern Mali or northern Niger to satisfy economic, political, or security interests (BOILLEY, 2011)[48]. These two states in particular have always fostered a rivalry around the Sahel. In the opinion of some actors of the rebellion, who were originally from Kidal, the Libyan infiltration in what comes under the Algerian backyard in the middle of the 2000s, was among the triggers of the 2006 rebellion. Algeria could have, at the very least, let some of its "agents" engage in rebellion to undermine ongoing Libyan projects, including the

48. "La Libye utilisa sans retenue la présence sur son sol et dans ses rangs de ces ressortissants sahéliens pour exercer pression et influence sur le Mali et le Niger, soufflant le chaud et le froid, annonçant la création possible d'un « Sahara central », revendiquant (manifestement sans fondement: See Pierre Boilley, *Les Touaregs Kel Adagh: dépendances et révoltes, du Soudan français au Mali contemporain*, Karthala, 1999 reissue, 2012, 644 p.) des attaques ponctuelles dans les zones sahariennes par de jeunes combattants" ("Libya unreservedly used the presence of these Sahelian natives on its soil and in its ranks to exert pressure and influence on Mali and Niger, blowing hot and cold, announcing the possible creation of a "central Sahara", claiming [manifestly without foundation: See Pierre Boilley, "Géopolitique africaine et rébellions touarègues. Approches locales, approches globales (1960-2011)" *L'Année du Maghreb*, CNRS Éditions, 2011, Sahara en mouvement, VII] intermittent attacks in the Saharan areas by young fighters.")

establishment of the Libyan consulate at Kidal which was the most symbolic example[49].

The 2011 rebellion showed the decisive influence of both Algeria and Libya again. It now seems certain that some actors in the very complex web of the Algerian authorities (LEBOVICH, 2015) were able to encourage the foundation of Ansar Dine by Iyad Ag Ghaly, although the latter only had very scanty resources at the end of 2011. The reasons for such support are twofold: they are due to the fact that Iyad Ag Ghaly, since the 1990 rebellion, has been considered very close to the Algerians and that supporting him in the context of this new rebellion allowed the Algerians to control the course of it somewhat, even though the MNLA, whose independence demands were known, represented for Algeria a risk of rebellious contagion in its south. This concern with not "importing" Sahelian problems is a constant in Algerian foreign policy (CHENA, 2013). Furthermore, some observers also consider that this Algerian decision could have been motivated by concern with responding to French interference, which is considered favourable to the Tuaregs of the MNLA[50]. Whatever the reasons, this decision has probably impacted heavily on Iyad Ag Ghaly's decision to turn to violent action, without making him the puppet of a foreign power.

During the last rebellion in Mali, the Mauritanian and Moroccan authorities, also undertook to "influence" some Tuareg rebels from the MNLA and the MAA (Arab Movement of Azawad) to satisfy their strategic (mainly security) interests in the Sahel (PELLERIN, 2015). While this did not directly contribute to the outbreak of the rebellion, this state support provides rebel actors (diplomatic, financial, territorial) with essential resources and thus maintains the dynamics of protest.

The geopolitical situation of the Sahelian region can also directly influence the logics of violent action in the Sahel. Pressure exerted by the former Libyan leader, Gaddafi, to make the *Ishumars* return to Niger in the late 1980s, was indirectly the source of the first Tuareg rebellion. More recently in 2011, the civil war in Libya and the collapse of Gaddafi's regime have in fact convinced some former rebels and *Ishumars* to return home, which gave the Malian rebellion an unprecedented scale in history.

49. Interviews with several leaders of the Tuareg rebellions in Mali, Bamako and Nouakchott, 2014-1016.

50. Interview with several leaders of Tuareg rebellions in Mali, including some of whom are close to the Algerian authorities, Bamako and Nouakchott, 2014-1016.

However, in both these specific cases, the decision to engage in rebellion had been made independently of the Libyan situation, which facilitated or accelerated the course of events.

Even beyond the region, the action of European states can prove decisive in the decision to turn to violent action. As early as 1963, it would seem that Zeyd Ag Intallah's willingness to engage in rebellion was motivated by the hope that France and Algeria would endorse this undertaking[51] (LECOCQ, 2011). This demonstrates that the logic of violent action has always been partly determined by the regional and international environment. From this point of view, as the former colonial power still watching over its interests in the Sahel, France is regularly singled out for its interference. These are official (involvement of the DGSE (General Directorate for External Security) in the 1991 rebellion in Niger recounted notably by Emmanuel Grégoire or involvement by the Danielle Mitterrand Foundation in favour of some Nigerien Tuareg rebels[52]) or not. The latter would merit a separate investigation. Since the colonial era, some military circles have maintained a certain romanticism for the desert and its Blue Men[53]. Strong Franco-Tuareg friendships have also been made in the civil system, among the media, mainly through the Paris-Dakar Rally car race. The twinning of towns has allowed for decentralised co-operative actions for the benefit of the Tuareg communities; tourism has given rise to many desert lovers and ears mindful of the fate of the Tuareg populations. These combined proximities form useful support intermediaries during rebellions (CASAJUS, 1995)[54]. During 2007, the prominent Nigerien Tuareg, Issouf Ag Maha, spared no efforts in gathering assistance, even highlighting in his speech topics (anti-nuclear struggle) more in tune with the expectations of his western audience than with the expectations of his militant base. However, the most striking co-operation between the rebel movements and the French authorities is the very explicit one, which linked them at

51. Pierre Boilley, *op. cit.,* 1999, details extensively how the OCRS was driven on by colonial officers, who were also active in promoting this project with their Tuareg contacts.

52. Emmanuel Grégoire, *op. cit*.

53. In 2012 and 2013, we met MNLA representatives boasting of always finding an open door at the Ministry of Defence.

54. We quote the case of the former French Member of the European Parliament, François Alfonsi, who supported the MNLA from 2012.

the time of Operation Serval and which resulted in the relocation of those people in Kidal who now form the CMA.

## *Jihadist interference and endogenisation of jihad*

Rebellions require before anything else possession of weapons, and composite alliances can be formed with groups which already have a military arsenal. They can be triggered by the support of foreign fighters, whether they be trafficking militias or especially terrorist groups. We will see in this section that although terrorism was originally an unknown phenomenon in Mali – including the identity of its actors – it has become an integral part of the Malian political and rebel arena. We are choosing to classify it in the category of external resources, as its roots are external, but Sahelian terrorism should be considered as being endogenous from now on.

Up to the late 1990s, the Sahel was spared any terrorist contagion, particularly from Algeria which was then plagued by a civil war that had seen the birth of several jihadist groups. However, elements of the GIA (Armed Islamic Group) fleeing the repression of the Algerian army, and then its successor the GSPC from 1997, found refuge in Niger and then in Mali. The implantation in the Sahelian belt was then assured over the years, with the Malian territory appearing more favourable for sanctuary for the terrorist groups than Niger. The GSPC initially received a relatively cold welcome in northern Mali, without the Malian army and foreign powers undertaking an offensive against them. This indifference is explained both by the relative powerlessness of the Malian security forces and by the fact that President ATT considered this threat as a matter for Algeria[55]. Despite some attempts to eliminate GSPC (which became AQMI in 2007) fighters by the Tuaregs, who were probably supported by the Malian state or foreign states, up to 2009[56], co-existence between AQMI and the Malian state would remain peaceful. Better still, it gradually gave rise to business relations, in turn affecting the security of the drug convoys, the supply of overpriced logistics, and above all intermediation in the release of hostages. These business relations were gradually combined with ideological

55. Pierre-François Naudé, "AQMI: pourquoi Bamako refuse d'y aller?", *Jeune Afrique*, 24 September 2010.

56. Interviews with several of the original leaders from Kidal, Bamako and Nouakchott, 2015-2016.

affinities, with the case of Iyad Ag Ghaly, being iconic from this point of view. From 2009, however, following the execution of the British hostage, Edwin Dyer, and the assassination of Colonel Lamana Ould Bou by AQMI in the Timbuktu region, the Malian state tried to carry out a major operation (Operation Djigui) against the terrorist organisation resulting in heavy losses on the Malian side[57]. This episode would have convinced AQMI that the Malian state supported by the western armies, was an obstacle to its development in northern Mali[58]. It was against this background that the 2011 rebellion took place. Although the MNLA cannot be accused of collusion with AQMI, from the first battles against the Malian army, the rebel movement relied on the power of Ansar Dine, which at the time it was clear was based on the terrorist organisation's resources. The capture of northern Mali in 2011 was therefore achieved through a circumstantial alliance between the rebels and three terrorist groups (AQMI, Ansar Dine and MUJAO).

Beyond the normative considerations regarding the perception of these terrorist groups, since 2011 it is no longer possible to think about the rebellion in Mali in isolation from the Sahelian terrorist groups. According to an adage commonly quoted in nomadic circles, "Kiss the hand that you cannot sever." In other words, considering the financial and military superiority of the terrorist groups, built up as a result of the combined inactivity of Mali and its regional neighbours, there are very few who undertake to fight them locally. A fortiori, when the jihad is caused by former figures of previous rebellions, such as Iyad Ag Ghaly, in whose fold are most of his fighters who have been faithful to him since 1990.

Not only are the population, as well as the rebel groups, forced to deal with the jihadist groups, but the latter provide resources to groups which so far had no access to rebellion. From this point of view, the example of the Fulani, originally from Tillabéry, who joined MUJAO in 2012[59], like that of the Fulani of Mopti who joined Katiba Macina-Ansar Dine from 2015 (ICG, 2016), are textbook cases.

57. Link to the Wikileaks cables about this.

58. Interview with an Arab from Timbuktu, Bamako, May 2016.

59. Interview with a Fulani who was a member of the MUJAO in Gao, Bamako, May 2016.

The switch of the young Fulani from Tillabéry to MUJAO is very directly related to inter-community clashes between Tuaregs of the Dawsahak tribe and Tolobe Fulani from the Tillabéry region, who have been overwhelmingly migrating into the Gao region since the 1990s. These deadly clashes were originally due to tensions over the region's pastoral resources. Against a background of an ongoing reduction in cultivable land, the Fulani herdsmen from Tillabéry have gradually been required to flee the agricultural lands occupied by the Zarma populations in Niger to migrate to Mali with their livestock.

This has accentuated rivalries with the Dawsahak Tuaregs in the Menaka region, who, after the outbreak of the 1990 rebellion, took advantage of the available weapons to form self-defence militias against the Fulani[60]. What was simply a pastoral conflict then turned into an inter-community armed clash, with the Nigerien Fulani seeking to protect themselves in their turn, if need be by finding support within the Nigerien state apparatus to form militias[61]. This forming of militias which has been at work since the late 1990s has been largely fuelled by the appetite of the leaders of each community involved in the theft and resale of livestock, involving a politically connected mafia which was getting rich in this way and for whom any peace process could be a synonymous with impoverishment. The 2012 rebellion again changed the nature of this conflict, with a part of the Dawsahak Tuaregs joining the MNLA. In reaction to, and out of fear that this was to their disadvantage, the Fulani then chose to engage extensively in MUJAO, finding a "security umbrella" in the terrorist group. The armed groups have since taken this issue hostage, considerably complexifying its solution. Although some local and international NGOs strive to bring the grass-roots communities closer together, the initiatives come into conflict with the rivalries between the armed groups, under pressure from the jihadist groups who use these inter-community tensions for recruitment purposes, and finally the mafia, which in addition to operating in livestock theft, now operates as a recruitment broker for the benefit of these jihadist groups. This multi-faceted conflict has mutated to the point of making it almost impossible to settle at present.

60. Interview with an actor engaged in mediation between the tribes involved, Bamako, May 2016.

61. Interview with a Nigerien official responsible for peace consolidation issues, Niamey, May 2016.

The case of the Fulani from the Mopti region follows a similar pattern. Many Fulani suffocated by the pastoral tensions, by land speculation in the Office du Niger, a semi-autonomous government agency in Mali, a white-collar "livestock mafia" (even within the Fulani community this time), and above all systematic harassment by Malian state officials (water and forest officials and gendarmes), found in Hamadoun Kouffa and his movement a means to take justice into their own hands (ICG, 2016; ISS, 2016). There are other populations (Soninke and Dogon), like this community, whose frustrations are worked on by the jihadist groups, paving the way for future conflicts where community-based claims will be found to be satisfied by means of the jihadist groups. For some socially marginalised communities, the terrorist groups have represented an opportunity to access a social status that the highly stratified Sahelian society[62] hampered. This is precisely the case of the Arab Al Wasra tribe in the Timbuktu region, which is now almost fully committed to AQMI's cause and has become, consequently, essential in managing public affairs in the Taoudéni region[63].

Thus, it appears that some of the causes which have inspired joining the rebel cause – injustice and the opportunity to exist socially – are among the main causes for engaging in jihadist groups[64]. It can even be argued that these latter groups are more likely to respond to the fighters' demands than the rebel groups and the state. Many interviews with the inhabitants of Gao and Timbuktu reveal that during the time of the jihadist occupation in 2012, the justice administered by the qadis on behalf of AQMI was fair and effective[65]. The endogenisation of jihad is a source of concern in the long term.

## *Economic and financial resources*

The Sahelian economy is based on traditional resources, including some like livestock rearing which have been undermined by climate vulnerabi-

62. See also Ibrahim Ag Youssouf, Ferdaous Bouhlel *et al.*,Études *sur les stratégies de développement économique et social des régions nord du Mali*, PSPSDN, 2012.

63. Interview with a prominent Arab from the Timbuktu region, Bamako, May 2016.

64. Mathieu Pellerin, Study on the radicalisation phenomenon in Mali on behalf of the European Union, June 2016.

65. Interviews with inhabitants of these two regions, Bamako, May 2016.

lity, while others like tourism have been drained by the regular insecurity since the early 2000s. The barter trade, whose roots go back to the caravan trade and which has existed since the raising of borders as smuggling (SCHEELE, 2012; PELLERIN et al., 2014) has therefore emerged as a leading resource and which has gradually diversified with the arrival of prohibited products (drugs and weapons) with very high added value. These prohibited products, whose market circulation by definition comes under trafficking and not smuggling, now constitute an essential form of financing for present-day rebellions.

Therefore, their economic model has nothing to do with the that of 1990s. Until the first rebellion in the 1990s, the main method of financing for armed groups was inspired by *rezzous* or *akafal* (total looting of strangers) and by ambushing civilians or soldiers to steal their equipment. The actors in the 1990 rebellion testified to the difficulties experienced in obtaining military equipment, and were forced to attack barracks to acquire weapons and to loot the premises of NGOs to provide themselves with vehicles[66]. The emergence of the grey economy (cigarette, weapons and then drugs networks) has considerably altered the situation, leading to financial stakes of a different scale. Although many authors, mainly economists, support the idea that the rebellions are mainly predatory (COLLIER, HOEFFLER, 2004), or even that the rebels would simply have become traffickers (GROSSMAN, 1999), we set ourselves apart from such a position which would neutralise the other factors, particularly the political and social ones. Moreover, it would be a mistake to consider that the grey economy is only undertaken by the rebels, and that it is not subject to any competition with state-related actors.

However, arguably the traffickers' interests have considerably reshaped the scales of armed engagement, as well as remodelling the factors for turning to violent action. First of all, they are a new source of available funding and the most important one nowadays[67]. In Mali, the first contribution by the drug traffickers may date back

66. Interview with an ex-front-line leader of the MPLA, Bamako, November 2012.

67. Interview with an actor who described himself as a "trafficker" in northern Mali, Telephone interview, September 2015.

to 2006, shortly after the outbreak of the Malian rebellion on 23 May. The drug traffickers from the Kidal region were asked by Iyad Ag Ghaly to contribute to the war effort[68], de facto broadening the extent of the rebellion. In addition to financing and therefore broadening its extent, the grey economy can even be a driving force for violent action, appearing very directly as a source of instability for the Sahel. Many consistent testimonies maintain that the MNJ is a movement originally created by Nigerien and Algerian drug traffickers[69] to serve as a screen for the development of illegal activities. The same reasoning can also be maintained with regard to the Malian rebellion in 2011, which quickly seemed to serve as a cover for the drug traffickers. For the MNJ, as for the MNLA, the rebellion was an opportunity to recover drug trafficking routes controlled by other actors, particularly Arabs, who had benefited from the support of the Malian or Algerian authorities[70].

The development of the grey economy (and particularly the trafficking networks, and specifically drugs) has redefined the alliance processes with the risk for the states that these networks will finance new rebellions against them. Therefore, controlling the routes has become an issue of sovereignty in addition to satisfying the appetite of the criminal networks. In this case, the Malian authorities would hence have sought to establish this link between the trafficker-rebels, by offering the most loyal tribal groups to the Malian state, control of some networks[71]. Although, this strategy has helped reduce the funding capacity of some tribes in the Kidal region, this has especially helped to accentuate tribal rivalries, which was one of the main factors for engaging in the 2006 and 2011 rebellions.

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68. Interview with an elected representative from Kidal, Bamako, January 2012.

69. Interview with former members of the MNJ and Nigerien officials, Niamey and Agadez, January 2016.

70. See also Wolfram Cacher “Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region,” Carnegie Paper, 2012.

71. See Wolfram Lacher, *Ibid*., Interview with a General in the Malian army, Bamako, May 2016.

On the basis of quite a few findings, the grey economy will remain at the heart of the war and political economy in northern Mali, following Clausewitz's adage that "War is the continuation of politics by other means." Considering that the actors who control the main networks of the grey economy in northern Mali currently all belong to armed signatories of the Algiers Accords, it is reasonable to imagine that their economic positions will be safeguarded after the war[72]. Touching these trafficking networks would threaten the stability and the tribal balances which are so sensitive in this area. If the demand remains the same, there is no reason to imagine that the supply will dry up as the production areas of products trafficked in northern Mali are numerous and hardly threatened: Latin America (cocaine), Morocco (hashish), Europe (medicinal drugs), or even in Asia and West Africa (methamphetamines).

The role played by the grey economy in the rebel dynamics has a certain number of knock-on effects, including the mains ones being the worsening in inter-community relations and the fragmentation of the armed groups. This is fairly recent and related to the democratisation and diversification of supply chains (particularly in drug products) enabling small groups to self-finance and therefore become autonomous[73]. The armed groups are therefore dealing with increasingly greater division, making the internal decision-making process in these groups more complex.

### Extent of the militant base

The extent of the militant base partly depends on the ideological or external resources mobilised. The defence of self-determination, the sponsorship of foreign powers, the influx of Tuareg fighters from abroad, or the defence of economic interests are all factors for mobilising fighters. The existence of catalysts even feeds this ideological rhetoric more easily and

72. Interview with the Secretary General of an armed group which is a signatory of the Algiers Accords, Bamako, May 2016.

73. Interview with a member of the CMA at the head of a group claiming such autonomy, Telephone interview, May 2016.

mobilises an extended base. Furthermore, the extent of support could not be explained solely by these motivations. On the one hand, the decision to engage in or support a rebellion falls under the theory of rational choice. On the other hand, the extent of the base largely depends on the actual community inclusiveness of the armed group making this demand.

The rebel image can be maintained permanently by the fighters for the political capital that it contains[74], including among the established leaders in state institutions. The rebellion – at least an elastic term – can be pursued from within. Effectively taking up arms, comes under personal and collective circumstantial calculations, whose specific feature in the Sahara (DEBOS, 2013) is that they are reversible[75].

Being a rebel is not a transitory state in life, no more than a risky detour. It is an almost permanent commitment, which the Tuareg actors who are institutionally organised in Niger, like in Mali, claim to justify their continued rebel engagement from within. In other words, even an integrated nomad and apparently favourable to the state's cause can decide to engage in rebellion.

Recent history is not lacking in novel personal trajectories of Tuaregs engaged at very high state institutional levels who sacrifice their career path (or hope to make it pick up) by joining the resistance movements. Hence, Aghaly Alambo who took over as head of the MNJ in 2007, when he was sub-prefect of Arlit. Hence, even Rhissa Ag Boula, at the root of the FLAA's revival in 2004, after seven years spent as Minister of Tourism, doubtlessly was driven to join the front because of the arrest warrant against him. Thus, Ibrahim Mohamed Assaleh who launched the MNLA in 2011 in Mali, when he was an elected member for the republic. Also, the same for Sheikh Ag Aoussa, who was deemed to be close to the Malian state security[76], who followed Iyad Ag Ghaly to Ansar Dine in 2012. There are countless examples which bear witness to the extreme volatility of the

74. To the point that meeting "false" rebels (who have never borne arms, but have sympathised with the cause) is common. The latter are nevertheless ridiculed by those who have actually experienced combat. See Frederic Deycard, *op. cit.*, 2011.

75. This feature is a relative curiosity in the world of rebel movements. The Tuareg rebellions are far from being as rigorous as their Latin American or Asian counterparts in terms of controlling and sanctioning the back and forth of their members.

76. Interview with a Gendarme Commissioner originally from northern Mali, Nouakchott, March 2014.

positioning and of alliances, whose drivers are generally far more complicated than the superficial divide between state versus rebellion suggests. The violent engagements can be understood, as moments of renegotiating positions vis-à-vis the state or its community. They are temporary vehicles for personal or collective advancement projects which are more or less linked.

As an Arab in the Timbuktu region admitted in his interview, engagement or not in a rebellion is subject to a rational risk/benefit analysis and is absolutely not dictated by membership or not of a state[77]. The example of the Lamhar Arabs, who are now officially in Mali's peace camp (in the Platform) is illuminating. Initially supporting the MNLA in the 2011 rebellion, they quickly withdrew, feeling that the group could not satisfy their interests, before allying with MUJAO and then returning to the side of the Malian state[78]. The idea of "patching up", suggested by Yvan Guichaoua, to describe the Sahelian rebellions is proving to be appropriate. The MNJ in 2007, as well as the MNLA in 2011, are the result of composite and reversible alliances, of last-minute positioning, splits and late conversions. Above all, this patching-up depends on the context, the configuration of forces present, the opportunities and on the other hand the restrictions offered by rebel engagement. By aggregating very different actors and with only short-term interests in co-operating, as was the case with the last two rebellions in Niger and Mali, the dynamics of rebellion naturally formed quite often without planning or clear direction.

The scale of the military base also stems from the community inclusiveness of the rebellion, namely the number of tribes or communities represented within it. The mobilised ideological resource is often not sufficient to explain the logics of violent action. It can conceal and co-exist with the internal logics of the groups which make it up. Some are just as ideological, but they support a communitarian or tribal (more or less hidden) rather than a nationalist cause. More precisely, the rebellions initiated for nationalist motivations have always come up against inter-tribal rivalries around appropriation of the nationalist discourse by a community in order to appropriate the peace dividends. In short, sub-Azawad agendas are hidden behind the inclusive discourse of the rebel leaders, affecting the defence of a region or a tribe. The Malian rebellions in 1990 and 2011,

77. Interview with an Arab originally from Timbuktu, Bamako, September 2013.

78. Interview with a Lamhar Arab from the Platform, Bamako, June 2016.

both apparently inclusive and with a wide-ranging social base, were partially infiltrated by the Ifoghas tribe supporting the defence of Kidal. It is the same for the 1990 rebellion in Niger, broken up into groups representing the different tribes, even if the fragmentation can be seen as a means of maximising the "peace dividends" as negotiations approach.

Conversely, some rebel episodes did not manage to establish a very extensive social base, because it was clear that the engagement was made by a single tribal group for motivations which particularly concerned the aforesaid group and in which the other tribes were not sufficiently reflected in. This was the case for the ADC rebellion in 2006 in Mali, which from the start was driven by the Ifoghas in Kidal. Furthermore, this example deserves some nuances, it being understood that the leader of this rebellion, Ibrahim Ag Bahanga, remained the natural leader of the MNLA rebellion still in the making, until his death in August 2011. This paradox doubtlessly finds its explanation in the figure of Ag Bahanga, who is eminently respected for having been one of the only ones to never take up arms. His "charismatic authority" (WEBER, 2003) was able to transcend tribal allegiances. The case of Iyad Ag Ghaly, during the 1990 rebellion, could come under this form of transcendent authority.

This volatility of trajectories and the existence of sub-nationalist interests constitute a permanent threat to challenging the state of peace because they make it more difficult to identify a point of consensus around which peace can be built. At the same time, it represents an opportunity for the states. Aware of the disparate nature of the factors of engagement, Mali and Niger are constantly seeking to weaken the groups internally as we will see later on. A constant feature of the Tuareg rebellions is the internal fragmentation which they suffer from, weakening the front, by opening up a negotiation/mediation process or by forming parastatal militias. In the long term, these divisive strategies nurture group resentment against each other, and create the conditions for future conflicts.

## An attempt at categorising logics of violent action in the context of Tuareg rebellions in the Sahel

Although these resources of violent protest can explain, once combined, the reasons for ongoing rebellions in completely different forms, each of these repertoires needs to be placed in the context of outbreak of rebellions. In accordance with the classification developed, the table below lists the catalysts for rebellions since 1916 and the extent of the social base of each one.

Table 2: Nature of catalysts of the various rebellions and extent of their social base

| | Catalysts for mobilisation | | Extent of the social base |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Ideological | External | |
| 1916-1917, Mali – Niger<br>47-year interval | - Logic of raids<br>- Jihad<br>- Colonial governance and decline of influence Ouillimiden (Mali) and Kel Aïr (Niger) | - Senussist support (Libya) in Niger | - Relatively limited (Ouillimiden and Kel Aïr) |
| 1963, Mali<br>27-year interval | - Logic of raids<br>- Search for autonomy in relation to the OCRS<br>- Governance by the independent Malian state | - French colonial influence (OCRS project) | - Limited (Ifoghas of Kidal) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1990, Mali | - Legacy of 1963<br>- Fall of Moussa Traoré's regime.<br>- Bad management of the droughts in the 1970s and 1980s (diversion of food aid) | - Return of the Ishumar from Libya (end of the Islamic Legion in Libya) | - Very extensive (all of the tribes in Mali) |
| 1990, Niger<br>16-year interval | - Tchintabaraden massacre<br>- Poor management of the Tuaregs who returned from Libya<br>- Poor management of the droughts in the 1970s and 1980s | - Return of the Ishumar from Libya (end of the Islamic Legion in Libya)<br>- Expulsion of the Tuaregs in Algeria | - Very extensive |
| 2006, Mali<br>6-year interval | - Marginalisation of the Ifoghas in favour of the Imghad<br>- Lack of implementation of the Algiers Accords (non-operational Special Units)<br>- Poor management of the drought in 2005 | - Algerian-Libyan rivalries related to the establishment of the Libyan consulate in Kidal | - Very limited (Ifoghas, Ifergoumessen, Kidal) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2007, Niger | - Food crisis in 2005<br>- Delay in applying decentralisation<br>- Delays in integrating ex-fighters<br>- Intra-Tuareg rivalries | - Drug trafficking interests<br>- Defence of family interests<br>- Interference by Algerian actors | - Restricted (Kel Tedele) |
| 2012, Mali | - Remilitarisation of northern Mali (PSPSDN) and partial compliance of the Algiers Accords<br>- Poor management of the drought in 2009-2010<br>- Marginalisation of the Ifoghas in favour of the Imghad<br>- Marginalisation of the Tuaregs in favour of the Arabs | - Presence of AQMI<br>- Drug trafficking interests<br>- War in Libya<br>- Algerian and French interference | - Very extensive (Ifoghas, Idnan, Ifergoumessen, Taghat Malet, Chamanamass, Lamhar Arabs, Berabiche Arabs, etc.…) |

## *Changing mobilisation factors*

This table highlights the gradual change in factors that have been triggering rebellions since 1916. Up until 1990, ideological mobilisation was seen as key through the continuing relationship of distrust between the Malian state and Tuareg communities since 1963, and the occurrence of the Tchintabaraden massacre which enabled the developing Nigerien rebel group in Libya to mobilise a very broad militant base. Exogenous catalysts existed since the mass departure of the *Ishumar* and the Tuareg fighters from Libya which was the driving force of both these rebellions. This development related to the Sahel's geopolitics, and promoted by the migra-

tions inherent to the nomadic identity of the Tuareg communities, was again decisive in 2012, since the war in Libya has been an accelerator or an amplifier of rebel engagement. However, like in 1990, there were many catalysts of an ideological nature on the eve of this rebellion, no doubt explaining, to a great extent, the scope of its militant base. The latest rebellions in Niger and in Mali have seen the emergence of two external dynamics: the grey economy and terrorism. These two phenomena largely contribute to the "internationalisation of local conflicts" (BOILLEY, 2011).

Although, we have already shown to what extent these factors profoundly changed the nature and economy of rebellions, it should be analysed how this impacts on the logics of peace consolidation and peacebuilding. In other words, if the factors for engaging in a rebellion evolve and become increasingly exogenous, the traditional responses of states to satisfy the motivations officially given by the armed groups are no longer enough. States acting on the ideological factors that they have made decisions on and the different peace accords concluded since 1990 in Niger and in Mali have always emphasised features responding to these factors through the "development – decentralisation – reintegration" triad. Yet, they have only partially adapted to the reality of a rebellion where the fighters' motivations result more from geopolitical upheavals, community rivalries, settling of personal scores, drug-trafficking interests, and which were largely swallowed up by AQMI. Since this change in nature has not been taken into account, imagined solutions can only be inadequate and therefore fragile.

## *Rebellions which were never totally put down*

The state of peace does not exist strictly speaking in the Saharan-Sahelian area. A quick retrospective looks at history shows, particularly for Mali, a continuous decrease in the interval between each of the rebellions as indicated in the table. If the incidents related to rebellions, but which have not turned into rebellion are included (kidnapping of Malian officials by Ibrahim Ag Bahanga in 2001, revival of the FLAA in Niger in 2004), the frequency is reduced even more to the extent that peace would appear more like a period of calm between two conflicting sequences. In times of war and peace, the dynamics are not fundamentally different. As Frédéric Deycard emphasises about Niger, "the ease in activating rebel movements, with all the constraints that this implies, proved the fluidity of status between ex-fighters and new rebels," (DEYCARD, 2011). This holds true for Mali too. This ease of activation is due to the presence of armed

men, who, besides rebellion, are far from disarming, taking advantage of this military capital for various purposes: establishing private security companies (like Issyad Kato's company SAGE in Agadez, or that of Ahmada Ag Bibi in Mali), re-entering the grey economy and banditry (road blocks). Some accumulation of this capital can even take place through these activities and therefore enable their actors to re-engage in the rebellion with more resources. This same holds true for the rebels who have been reintegrated within the army and for whom training supplied by the international co-operation forces (United States and France), as well as material donations are equally capital, in time mobilised in the context of a rebellion. Frédéric Deycard defends such a hypothesis regarding the reintegrated fighters in the *Forces nationales d'intervention et de sécurité* (FNIS), who a priori in a career path and having status, deserted in the early days of the MNJ rebellion, explaining that "in a way, their presence in the FNIS only represented a temporary situation and a form of legalising their normal rebel activity. The rebellions, before and after this interim period, appear as legitimations, vis-à-vis the community, with their military professionalisation and their privileged status," (DEYCARD, 2011). A fact under-estimated by the author and that many interviews in Niger, as in Mali, allow us to support, is the social pressure which forces reintegrated fighters to desert. Not integrating in the rebellion is reverting to opposing it, there is no or little room for neutrality, a fortiori for the integrated rebels who may have to fight their former comrades in arms. This social pressure is not always experienced as a constraint and it can be galvanising and encourage actors to mobilise. During the MNJ rebellion, mobilisation out of a spirit of comradeship or brotherhood was noted, particularly for the *neo-Ishumars*. As part of our research on the 2011 Malian rebellion, the same determinants were reported, including within Ansar Dine. In such a context of mobility between a state of war and of peace, beyond the response to the vested interests supported by the armed groups, the only way of restricting the risk of turning to violent action is to satisfy the diffuse interests of the armed men who make them up. Yet, as we have shown in this chapter, the factors for changeover are many and not always easy for the states to counteract.

# IV – Peacemaking in Mali and Niger

It will be remembered from the preceding section that while rebellion is the expression of ideological demands through violence which the state must respond to with a view to moving towards peace, other considerations must be taken into account and complexify the peace equation claiming that the state must provide a response to each rebel demand. The interference of foreign actors, the interweaving of commercial issues in ideological motives, the sub-regional and inter-tribal rivalries considerably obscure the determinants of peace. This suggests a certain number of questions which this section seeks to answer.

Is the search for peace the demonstration of structural characteristics or the fruit of an *a priori* more enlightened leadership in Niger than in Mali? Is the current peace in Niger, in particular, the result of plural and short-term strategies or of a considered and consistent process which is being consolidated over time?

On the contrary, have the actions deployed by states to put down outbreaks of rebellion created more tension than peace in the medium or long term? We are thinking here of the strategies deployed by both the Malian and Nigerien states, to instrumentalize inter-community tensions. Both countries have chosen to support the formation of community militias to weaken the rebellions at the risk of creating the same causes of future rebellions as was the case in Mali. Similarly, both countries have tried to make the rebel movements implode by negotiating with some leaders. This strategy pays off in the short term, but deliberately ignores the structural background which armed protest capitalises on.

To what extent is the attainment of peace dependent on exogenous factors and is it beyond the reach of the states involved? We will see here that the impact of the jihadist groups, the grey economy, but also the regional geopolitics considerably reduces the room for manoeuvre of these states, while questioning their responsibility as a sovereign state very directly. Indeed, these three exogenous factors are anchored in (more or less) fragile states which are unable to control their entire territory. We will also see that on the contrary, states can use some of these exogenous factors to their advantage, particularly the grey economy in order to try to preserve peace.

Do the rebellions necessarily create endogenous mechanisms for controlling violence or settling conflicts? Matrimonial alliances, compensation principles for damages suffered, and traditional religious authorities contribute to the arsenal of "common" measures which protagonists of conflicts use to control or stop violence and perhaps to seal more long-term pacts of reciprocal solidarity.

We propose a simple classification summarised in the table below to facilitate the interpretation of and account for the wide range of practical tools activated in Mali and Niger to achieve peace. It seems to us particularly necessary to highlight the importance of the unofficial peace mechanisms, which are formidably effective, even if they have a limited impact over time.

Table 3: Achieving peace

| | Violent action | Non-violent action |
|---|---|---|
| Official channels | Domestic intervention<br><br>Counter-insurgency, counter-terrorism (national forces)<br><br>International intervention<br><br>Stabilisation, counter-insurgency, counter-terrorism (international forces) | Domestic intervention<br><br>Dialogue, institutional reconfiguration<br><br>International intervention<br><br>Support for the peace process, funding of development projects. |
| Unofficial channels | Domestic intervention<br><br>militias<br><br>International intervention<br><br>operational support | Domestic intervention<br><br>co-optation, bargaining of loyalties<br><br>International intervention<br><br>mediation, pre-negotiations |

In the face of the multi-faceted configurations observed in the previous section, the states of Mali and Niger used seemingly similar procedures to "make peace." In this area, the processes are established in each of the states: use of armed force with a view to weakening the rebellion; starting a peace process to divide the rebellion from within; managing the peace process with actors involved in it; gradual imposition of this peace process on all the rebel actors. The recent rebellions have been put down in this way, but this sequence is not exclusive, as indicated in Table 1 above. Indeed, the 1963 and 2007 rebellions were put down without a formal peace agreement.

As discussed in the introduction, both states are struggling to convert the efforts at a ceasefire into a more ambitious stage of peacebuilding. Far from constituting a linear process, peacebuilding in Niger and Mali is fraught with crises (local, national, regional; climate, social, and safety), which correspond to moments of protest against so-called "hybrid" arrangements, which safeguard the peace with difficulty, without permanently building it. In short, war appears as an instrument for controlling disputes between the rebel actors and the state (including parastatal actors), which is seized, maintained, and dropped in particular circumstances and with specific resources (institutional and financial) (DEBOS, 2013) which is the real purpose of this research. Since these "hybrid" arrangements suit the warring parties, they are not encouraged to turn the ceasefire into a "positive peace", specifically guaranteed by social justice, effective reconciliation, or even the provision of basic services by the state (GALTUNG, 1996).

Niger, despite everything, appears to be more advanced in this area, as we will see, through an integrated political framework and an innovative tool for conflict prevention and controlling tension: the High Authority for the Consolidation of Peace. Nevertheless, short-termism dominates and violence has never been totally erased from the political arena. It is a persistent possibility, considered by the rebels and expected by the state, which seeks to prevent or contain it. The outbreak of violence admittedly represents a critical moment in political life, but it does not necessarily challenge the state's survival. An exception to this model is perhaps, as discussed in the introduction, the Malian case in 2012, where the "technological shock" of the Libyan collapse and AQMI's involvement in the rebellion gave the rebels unprecedented fire power. However, even in this extreme case, it can be seen *a posteriori* that the political practices of the dominant elites have not been fundamentally revised and that President Amadou Toumani Touré's criticised "consensual" management (BAUDAIS, CHAUZAL,

2006) is more or less replicated by his successor, with the approval of the country's foreign protectors.

## Political integration: Mali v Niger

The political integration of the Tuareg communities in Niger is much more advanced than in Mali and for various reasons. One of these is geographical. The state of Niger is less divided geographically than Mali. Although this is well-known and can seem trivial, this fact has promoted exchanges (cultural, social, economic and political) between the north and south. The capital of northern Niger, Agadez, is easily accessible from Niamey, whereas Kidal, the centre of all rebellions since 1963 has remained extremely isolated. So, Agadez has for decades been a crossroads where northern and southern populations mix (SALIFOU, 1993), including from a regional point of view (BENSAAD, 2003). The ancient existence of the trade routes between Agadez, Niamey and Zinder was a determinant for including the north in the national economy. Emmanuel Grégoire (2011) maintains that the population of Agadez was mainly Hausa in the 1990s. On the other hand, northern Mali is not structurally integrated in trade networks with its south. The case of Kidal is an extreme, just like this region, sometimes considered as the Algerian "last wilaya[79]" (province), only breathing through Algeria. More than half of the Kidalois population has Algerian nationality.

These mixtures, in Niger, are reflected by marriages which *as a minimum* forge effective channels of communication, or even interdependencies which prevent the risk of a conflict. The Nigerien populations are much more mixed than in Mali, whether between the so-called northern and southern populations, but also between the different northern tribes. The north-south mix, protected by marriage, is a reality which no longer surprises anyone in Niger to such a point that it is ignored in most of the analyses. From the lowest to the highest level of the state, it is not unusual for political actors or operators to have at least one Tuareg among their wives. This has helped to soften the north-south community polarisations. Once again, the situation is quite different in Mali. Even within the northern tribes, the feeling of caste and tribal differentiation does not form a barrier in Niger, and it is very uncommon to see Imghads marrying Ifoghas,

79. The wilaya is the base unit of local authority in Algeria. The country has 48.

which is an almost non-existent situation in Mali. Moreover, although the sedentary Songhai and Fulani populations are in the majority in the river regions, they are largely a minority north of the river, encouraging an identity divide since 1960.

Beyond these structural factors which have been converted into effective social interactions, Niger is often cited as an example for its system of integration and political representation of the "Tuareg minorities" (PEZARD, 2014), and more broadly speaking, of nomadic minorities. This is partly due to how Nigerien political life functions, informally structured around ethno-regional political compositions (Hausa, Songhai-Zarma). In Mali, the political arena thrives more on relations between the centre and the peripheries, a context of north-south polarisation conducive to the development of irredentist demands.

Also in Mali, community loyalties are declared, made public and claimed. Tribalizing the political arena is, on the contrary, a serious accusation in the Nigerien political arena and an attack on republican impartiality. During the last presidential campaign (2015-16) each camp was furthermore accused of doing so and putting the national unity at risk[80]. Tribalism is disqualifying in government, even though finely-tuned ethnic combinations chair the formation of governments and cabinets behind the scenes.

The only reported "ethnic entrepreneurs" in Niger are the Tuareg activists[81]. The ethnic demand is however fully integrated into the Malian political arena.

Besides this inclusive dimension of the political arena, Niger also specifically opted for a policy of promoting minorities, at least at community representative level. Since the end of the first rebellion, the integration of some cadres to strategic posts was supposed to block the process for triggering rebellions with the main commanders having been appointed to strategic posts to neutralise the risk that the single appointment of one or another may create resentment: Mohamed Anacko as High Representative for the Consolidation of Peace and Rhissa Ag Boula as Minister of Tourism. The appointment strategies which are not part of any legal quota framework

80. This was particularly salient on the day after the foiled coup and the electoral debates in Niger in late 2015 and the start of 2016.

81. The interpretations of this paragraph are from an interview with a leading university academic in Niamey (June 2016).

only have a limited influence, but they temporarily help to achieve social peace, and Niger with the appointment of Brigi Rafini as Prime Minister in 2011, has extended this process to disproportionate scales. Several hundred officers and advisors indeed work in the prime minister's office nowadays, similarly in the presidency, the National Assembly or even the HACP[82]. This network is made up of nomadic elites, sorted within each tribe and civil society body so that their co-optation is sufficient to temper the elements favourable to rebellion[83].

This strategy has been very openly thought through and implemented to deal with the Libyan crisis, and successfully, even though Niger is still naturally more exposed than Mali to influences from Libya, which it shares a border with[84]. In 2014, when the closure of Imouraren made hundreds of young people (many of whom were former rebels) unemployed[85], the HACP (with other Nigerien actors) used this strategy once again. This system of co-optation, although expensive, also has the advantage of promoting the circulation of information and intelligence helping to build up a social and safety network which is often combined with intermarriages.

This Nigerien integration system goes further. Its strength lies in its capacity for extension, so that actors with objective reasons to protest against the current regime paradoxically belong to it. The reason for this is certainly due to access to state (and international) revenue channels, almost always entirely reserved for actors of this informal network[86]. This network, which has branched out to networks of power, channels the temptations of some figures for political and economic emancipation.

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82. Interviews with several members of this network, Niamey, May 2016. The logic of the HACP is explicitly based on local community intermediaries, citizens of municipalities considered "at risk", paid by the institution, responsible for monitoring possible local tensions and relaying the information back to Niamey (interview with Colonel-Major Abou Tarka, Chair of the HACP, Niamey, June 2016).

83. Interview with a presidential advisor, Niamey, May 2016.

84. Other considerations somewhat reduce the role of the HACP in managing the return flows from Libya. One of them is the main armed organisation from Libya of the Malian Colonel Mohamed Najim with his men.

85. *Ibid*.

86. Interview with an economic operator belonging to this group, Niamey, May 2016.

At civil society level, when an identity and protest movement is born in the north of the country, it is nipped in the bud precisely by these former figures integrated in the regime. During the establishment of the CRI initiated by several youngsters originally from the Agadez region (including many ex-MNJ fighters), the state apparatus and its affiliates in Agadez (particularly the mayor Rhissa Feltou) worked successfully to contain the organisation (see the box below). The reasons are doubtlessly due to the identity of some of the CRI's leaders as much as the vindictiveness of the organisation. This case illustrates the regime's fear of allowing the Tuareg cause be discussed outside of state intermediaries, its responsiveness and its resources to channel disputes in the making.

Putting aside this control of dissenting voices, the state also maintains order by distributing revenue through various more or less official channels. The prime minister's office is one of the main channels, where several hundred Tuareg officials and advisors are financed[87]. The community channels are used for this purpose. Most of the Tuaregs engaged in community activities are dependent on state remittances, whether they are traditional civil society actors like Mano Aghaly, until recently Minister of Health, but behind the foundation of the NGO Thamed, or former rebels like Mohamed Ajidar and Ahmed Oaghaya at the head of the NGO Croisade. All are in the government's sphere of influence, a means for the state to ensure minimum loyalty.

Finally, the economic and commercial channels are mobilised in that respect, through the award of public contracts or sub-contracting contracts. Sharif Ghabidine[88], who died at the start of 2016, had established himself as the preferred beneficiary of public contracts in the Agadez region and maintained many former rebels, employed directly or in a capacity of providing sub-contracting contracts[89]. This leads to contradictory configurations where the actors, who do no conceal their hostility towards the central government, work for one of the leading barons of the present regime.

87. Interview with an advisor to the prime minister's office, Niamey, May 2016.

88. Sharif Ghabidine was an Arab economic operator from Niger. He was also the elected member for Agadez and remained until his death the main financier for the party in power, the PNDS.

89. Interview with several prominent figures in Agadez, January 2016.

These revenue allocation mechanisms therefore help to integrate actors potentially hostile to the state and to gain their loyalty in the short term, without guaranteeing their integration into society and Nigerien political life in the long term, or convincing them to permanently give up the armed struggle. The inherent limitation of this model is that it mainly relies on fragile financial revenue. On the one hand, partly as a result of international aid, this revenue is not therefore fully controlled by the Nigerien state. On the other hand, the availability of this revenue depends on the state's financial situation, which is weaker today[90]. The suspension, announced by the President, of all of the advisors who form a significant part of this network reflects the limitations of this expensive system, with the government betting on the fact that the gold boom dampens the shock generated by the suspension of wages, on average in the region of 300 000 FCFA per advisor[91].

CRI – MNA: same struggle in different forms?

In January 2014, a Nigerien civil society movement emerged in Agadez: the Collective for Renewal and Innovation (CRI). This movement, made up of young people, mainly originally from Agadez, is presented as "a collective of organisations committed to the struggle to improve the population's living conditions and in strict compliance with the laws of the Republic. " Vindictive in its positions (particularly against the lack of benefits from mining at Agadez), the movement mobilised the sons of former rebels (including its Secretary-General El Kontchi Mohamed Aoutchiki), and organised demonstrations until the different channels going to central government were mobilised to curb its enthusiasm: with a ban on demonstrations by the CIR announced by the Mayor of Agadez , due to a lack of document provided for him to recognise the organisation's status. This ban would have provoked the anger of some of the CRI's youth, who would have been restored to calm in the night through the regional council's president's networks at the request of the central government in Niamey. 10 CRI members, including the Co-ordination,

90. See for example "Niger: les comptes publics dans le rouge", *Africa Intelligence*, 19 July 2016.

91. Interview with an advisor to the prime minister, Niamey, May 2016.

Rachid Kollo, were also imprisoned in February 2014 for having organised an unauthorised demonstration. Yet, the CRI youth have never turned to violence, due to the efforts of multiple intermediaries who are busy without stint to speak equally to the young as well as the state party, obtaining concessions from both sides. This approach seems typical of the effective Nigerien mechanisms for preventing a violent escalation.

The fate of the CRI provides a striking contrast with that of the MNA, its Malian counterpart created in November 2010 by several young people from different regions of Mali. The purpose is not far removed from that of the CRI, if you believe its foundation statement: "To defend and promote a peaceful policy, in order to achieve the legitimate objectives and to recover all the historic rights stolen from the Azawad people in their diversity," by "condemning violence and terrorism in all their forms ." Although the MNA was not hindered at the outset, even being permitted to organise its Congress in Timbuktu, the imprisonment of two of its leaders, including Moussa Ag Acharatoumane following this Congress (for suspected car thefts), had the effect of radicalising the movement which, with the combination of other rebel forces and tribes (notably the Ifoghas) would become the MNLA a year later. In Niger, the imprisonment of the young protesters was the climax of the crisis, triggering initiatives on both sides towards appeasement. In Mali, the imprisonment of the MNA leaders, which was immediately mobilised through social media, was presented by their sympathisers as a sign of impossibility of dialogue with the state.

This difference in trajectories can be explained, among other causes by the absence of actors who can be activated by the Malian government to discourage this spirited youth. However, this is partly due to the fact that in 2010, the dynamics at work were already conducive to preparing an armed movement, which was probably not the case in early 2014 in Niger.

Mali also has made efforts in terms of political integration. This includes the appointment of the Tuareg Prime Minister, Ag Hamani in 2002, while former commanders were appointed to strategic posts: Zeidan Ag Sidilamine, or even Iyad Ag Ghaly, who was appointed advisor to the presidency of the republic in 2007.

However, the rebels' bases' reaction to these appointments seem to differ in both countries. They can alternatively be regarded as betrayals

or victories of the cause. Both discourses co-exist in both countries, but the repertoire for discrediting leaders absorbed by the state is doubtlessly more open in Mali[92]. A hypothesis is that the respective bases of the leaders are more polarised in Mali than in Niger, each co-optation of a leader causing resentment among those who no longer recognise them. A second hypothesis is due to the lower capacity of rebel movements to create new leaders in Niger: very few new protest figures have emerged in Niger after the MNJ leaders were absorbed by the state. Now, these leaders are key figures (they are always "ahead") despite the criticisms against them from the young Tuareg activists. In Mali, on the contrary, the MNA represented a pool of young charismatic militants who partly relegated the old rebel guard and survived the early disappearance of the leader who they trusted the most, Ibrahim Ag Bahanga.

### The use of armed deterrence

The use of force by the Malian and Nigerien military has often been among the components which have fuelled rebellion in these countries' history, whether it be in Niger, with the events already discussed in Tchintabaraden, or in Mali, with the repression of the first incidents in 1963, previously discussed, or the occupation of Tinzawaten in September 2007, provoking the resumption of hostilities by Ibrahim Ag Bahanga. What is at issue here is not the problem of use of force as such, but the fact that this use often has been the opportunity for atrocities on the civilian populations. The armies, particularly the Malian one since 1963, are associated with this image, and it is very difficult for them to redeploy in the north, without this perspective alone being a reason for armed engagement. So, the only construction of military barracks as part of the PSPSDN from 2009 in the north of the country incurred the wrath of many Tuaregs in Mali[93].

However, once the rebellion has broken out, use of force – or the threat of using force – can prove to be a strong deterrent when the rebels' enga-

92. This suggestion is not scientific, but is based on regular visits for many years by the authors of this report to social media supporting Tuareg causes respectively in Mali and Niger.

93. Besides the fact that this construction was part of the objections voiced by the MNLA, many interviews with civilians confirmed this sentiment. See also Ag Youssouf *and al*., 2012.

gement is based on weak motivations or built on a coalition of different interests. So, among the causes for the Nigerien demobilisation in 2009, the deployment of two MI25 helicopters by the Nigerien armed forces against the MNJ was, according to the testimonies of the MNJ fighters, the determinant (GUICHAOUA, 2011). Against a background of conflicts between the movement's leaders and the base and a challenge to the leaders' real motivations, these strikes discouraged the aforementioned base from pursuing a fight which was not worth the effort. This feeling, which was very current in the fighting ranks of the MNJ, is still firmly ingrained nowadays[94], with some ex-fighters saying that they realised that the cause was not genuinely supported enough to risk their lives. For other Nigerien ex-fighters we met, this Nigerien military pressures and the now proven risk of strikes by the armed forces in the Aïr mountains simply changed how they thought about the rebellion. One of them said along these lines: "The young people of Aïr will never initiate a rebellion from the mountains to get shot from above. If there is a rebellion, it will be in the cities, where the rebels will be protected from air strikes. The young people have held meetings to discuss this[95]."

Since the end of the MNJ, this armed deterrence has even been reinforced by the US and French military presence which is an essential parameter in the risk/benefit analysis. A former rebel leader questioned on this subject agrees: "No rebellion which is not supported by the French or the Americans will not work, it would be suicide[96]." There is little doubt that if the Nigerien regime called on this western armed presence to fight against terrorism, it is also counting on it to discourage potential rebels from taking action[97].

No doubt drawing on the lessons of the success of the MI25, President Amadou Toumani Touré also called on eastern European pilots in January 2011 to support his scarce airborne resources, but the scale of the militant base was such and the military resources committed by the MNLA and Ansar Dine (due to the support of AQMI) made the threat of armed deterrence futile. The engagement of armed militias made up of fighters

94. Many interviews conducted at Agadez in January 2016 confirm this impression.

95. Interview with an ex-MNJ fighter, Agadez, January 2016

96. *Ibid*.

97. Interview with a presidential advisor in Niger, Niamey, May 2016.

originally from the north also plays a part in this logic of using force, reflecting the powerlessness of the regular armed forces.

## Institutional responses: old remedies and state innovation

### *The repeated call for decentralisation.*

The issue of decentralisation, in Niger like in Mali, is long-standing and largely preceded the rebellions. However, the decentralisation process has always had its greatest advances (nationally) as a result of rebellions. So, the peace accords of the 1990 rebellions endorsed the idea of "decentralisation" for Niger (Ouagadougou Accord in 1995) and of "special status" for Mali (National Pact in 1992) in response to the nationalist demands voiced by the armed rebel groups. Similarly, the 2006 Algiers Accord in Mali strongly emphasises increasing decentralisation, particularly by calling for increased skills transfers and support for regionalisation in Kidal. Although the lack of a peace accord following the 2007 rebellion in Niger makes it more difficult to assess the place of decentralisation in achieving peace, the adoption of the regionalisation law in 2008 seems to respond to the MNJ's action. Finally, the regionalisation process is at the heart of the Algiers Accords that were supposed to end the 2012 rebellion in Mali. Therefore, decentralisation has quite logically been the most direct response to the demands for autonomy by the various rebel armed groups since 1990.

The demands in terms of decentralisation come from three dimensions: the search for autonomy in local public policy (access to public resources, development of direct co-operation with sponsors without going through central government); the search for partial ownership of primary materials located in the north; the search for elected posts to increase communities' national representation.

The trajectories of both states show fairly similar commitments in terms of decentralisation: the communalisation phase (1998 in Mali and 2004 in Niger) in the aftermath of the "great rebellions" of 1990, and then a shift towards regionalisation (2011 in Niger and to come in Mali). Paradoxically, for a long time Niger has been accused of lagging behind compared to Mali (OLIVIER DE SARDAN, 2006). The commitment of Alpha Oumar Konaré and Ousmane Sy's team has indeed ranked Mali among the leading countries in terms of communalisation since 1993, while the process has lagged

behind a lot in Niger. Subsequently, Niger has caught up to the point of leading the way through a regionalisation process which has effectively given rise to elected regional councils since 2011. However, in fact, Mali like Niger suffers from the same problems in terms of decentralisation: low resource mobilisation, limited skills transfers, financial under-funding of local authorities (PELLERIN, 2015; MARTE, 2012). Both countries are experiencing a "double effectiveness" (MARTE, 2012), that is effective legally, but very relative in practice mainly because of the states' inaction. Niger has not been left behind from this point of view. Although the decision to amend the mining code in 2013 to ensure a handover of 15 % of mining revenue to the local authorities generated enthusiasm (PEZARD, 2015), in actual fact, the promised revenue was not handed over[98]. When you consider that the redistribution of uranium revenues was at the heart of the MNJ's demands, this is likely to relativize the effectiveness of decentralisation in perspective in terms of peace consolidation.

The effectiveness of the link between decentralisation and peace remains in question and would merit a specific study of this subject. Although the process allows for the legitimate emergence (with the population's blessing) of former rebel leaders to positions of responsibility (cases abound in Niger, like Mohamed Anacko, President of the Regional Council of Agadez), this process can also be a source of conflict. Herein is perhaps the difference between Niger and Mali. In Mali, like in many respects, decentralisation has sharpened inter-community tensions: demand by force for the establishment of a municipality (Ibrahmin Ag Bahanga in 1999); inter-community tensions around the awarding of public contracts; intra-tribal rivalries (Kel Adagh in 1999 in Kidal), intertribal rivalries (between Ifoghas and Imghad during the municipal elections in 2009), and inter-community rivalries (between Arabs and Tuaregs during the parliamentary elections in 2007). The latter rivalries certainly fuelled the dynamics of rebel engagement in 2011. In Niger, although the rivalries between the traditional authorities and the local authorities are known, decentralisation has not caused so much tension, although rivalries between networks may exist as demonstrated over the past two years by the attempts to disqualify the Mayor of Iferouane or the President of the Regional Council of Agadez[99]. In short, it appears that decentralisation can aggravate fault lines, particu-

98. Interview with a ROTAB (Network of Organisations for Transparency and Budgetary Analysis) official, Niamey, May 2016.

99. Interview with an elected representative for Agadez, Agadez, January 2016.

larly pre-existing community ones. Again, the lower polarisation of tribal identities in Niger partially protects the country from these risks.

## *HACP: is it an innovative institution?*

In some respects, Niger has begun a *peacebuilding* phase, with the HACP being the favoured institutional frame for peace consolidation. Its operation has changed little since 1995 when the High Commission for the Restoration of Peace was created as a tool to implement the post-rebellion peace accord. Its presidency, entrusted to Mohamed Anacko, the last rebel to have signed the accord, constituted a guarantee to include the latter in the decision-making process. The MNJ rebellion in 2007 forced the authorities to renew this tool by renaming it the High Authority for National Reconciliation and Democratic Consolidation in 2010, before it became the High Authority for the Consolidation of Peace in 2011. Since 2010, it is significant that two military personnel have succeeded each other as the head of the institution, in the person of Colonel Lawal Chekou Koré, a Tubu figure who would become head of the DGDSE, and then Colonel Abou Tarka. This could indicate a change in approach against the MNJ begun in 2009, namely a firm stance with regard to areas considered "fragile" by the HACP. The HACP is therefore the institutional common link which connects the 1990 peace process to nowadays, with the bonus of unprecedented activism, the HACP surpasses the role which was originally granted to it to be involved in all the issues likely to weaken the Nigerien state in Diffa, Tillabery or in Agadez[100]. In this sense, the High Authority is redefining its role in the light of the security and political priorities facing Niger.

The political support enjoyed by the HACP at the highest level (presidency) is one of its strengths, unlike Mali where the issue of peacebuilding has never been the subject of strong and long-term political support, including the components of the process such as decentralisation. This support for the HACP is also not without creating jealousies within the state apparatus, some deeming that the institution is nibbling away at some sovereign ministries and absorbing the SDS (Strategy for Development in the Sahel). Established as an essential partner for international sponsors in the (very large and expandable over and over again) peace area in Niger, the HACP has become the one-stop-shop for those who aspire to benefit from international assistance, foremost among them are the former rebels. By

100. Interview with Abou Tarka, Niamey, May 2016.

sprinkling a number of small project for the benefit of local actors who count and who must be satisfied, the HACP is making itself indispensable to the latter, and is creating a large network of more or less compelled informers, who are of great use to the state in terms of national security[101]. It is both a chamber for recording security alerts and a fund for controlling tension, intervening in "all four corners of the country" as soon as tension emerges. Its leader, Abou Tarka, however does not make it the ultimate tool in conflict resolution, but he sees it as an instrument helping "to win hearts and minds[102]." This is, perhaps, the limitation of the HACP in terms of *peacebuilding*.

The HACP has achieved a subtle balance. Aside from its role in early warning and crisis management, the institution plays an important role in social peace. It is still the symbol of the peace caravans which continue to go across northern Niger to spread a message of peace and to ensure that it is actually understood by all, in transit consistently contributing to leaving the Nigerien state's stamp on the most remote areas of the country[103]. It is significant that the HACP also obliges foreign donors to maintain a leading role in projects funded by them. Here again, the concern is to assert the state's presence to prevent its absence from being perceived as weakness by entrepreneurs of instability. Its financial dependence on foreign donors is doubtlessly its main weakness.

Unlike Niger, Mali does not have any similar organisation which has been working for peace consolidation continually since 1990, even less since 1963. The Northern Commission, which was created specifically to implement the National Pact, as well as the ADN (Northern Mali Development Agency) could have incorporated into similar instruments, if they had not lost their legitimacy with the appointment at their head of actors who suffered from a lack of inclusiveness, since they belonged to the Imghad community. Furthermore, Niger's ambition to distance itself from these institutions very marked by community bias seemed clear if Abdoul Karim Saidou is to be believed: *"Refusing to follow the Malian example where the 1992 National Pact established a Northern Commission, the (Nigerien) Government did not intend to make the HCRP (High Commission for the Restoration of Peace) an institution for the benefit of an ethnic group or a*

101. *Ibid*.

102. Interview with Abou Tarka, Niamey, June 2016.

103. Interview with Abou Tarka, Niamey, May 2016.

*specific region"* (ABDOUL KARIM SAIDOU, 2009). Again, the same observation can be established as that made regarding the integration process. As part of a *peacemaking* process complicated by and interspersed with inter-community rivalries, under-representing some of these communities at the head of institutions responsible for implementing the peace accord can only threaten this process.

## Militias and divisions to weaken

The rebellions in Niger and in Mali have been largely destroyed or put down because of internal divisions, which are reflections of the disorderly mobilisation processes mentioned earlier. None have escaped this rule, with the exception perhaps of the 2006 Malian rebellion, which was largely concentrated in Kidal and whose dissent could have been feigned by Ibrahim Ag Bahanga to retain an active rebel location in the event that the peace would not provide a satisfactory outcome for the Kidalois populations[104].

These divisions are not only the result of the composite dimension of the rebellions. They have often been encouraged by the Nigerien and Malian states, which is a proven strategy in other contexts, including Chad (DEBOS, 2013). Some Nigerien observers mention the role played by the state in the creation of the FPN and the FFR, through Rhissa Ag Boula, in order to weaken the MNJ in 2008 and 2009[105]. In the 1990 and 2006 Malian rebellions, the Malian state managed, with the support of Algeria, to divide the rebel groups by relying on certain key actors, particularly Iyad Ag Ghaly, but also Zeidan Ag Sidilamine. These short-term strategies fuelled inter-community rivalries, sowing the seeds for future rebellions. So, we can discuss the cross-instrumentalisation of the Imghads and Ifoghas by the Malian state, playing on their ancient historical status rivalries[106]. The

104. Interview with someone close to Ibrahim Ag Bahanga, Bamako, November 2015.

105. Interviews with several actors in the Nigerien rebellion, Niamey, May 2016.

106. In the pre-colonial status order, the Imghads are the subjects of noble groups, which the Ifoghas are part of. Decolonisation and the egalitarian socialist project of the first Malian President, Modibo Keita, have de facto undermined (but not totally destroyed) this order. The chieftanship and the traditional hierarchies, synonymous with slavery, no longer had a home in independent Mali (Cf. Pierre

support given to General Gamou and the Imghads to the detriment of the Ifoghas of Kidal, hence was a motive for rebellion in both 2006 and 2011. More precisely, it should be analysed if the Nigerien state's instrumentalisations have historically produced similar results.

These strategies are not restricted to dividing the rebel movements from within by promoting one or several actors from within it. They are also reflected by the forms of material support for the establishment or the maintenance of rival community movements (like in Niger in 2007) which serve to break the armed group's propaganda, and especially by supporting the creation of civil militias. The case for the Imghad and Arab militias formed by President ATT to break Ibrahim Ag Bahanga's rebellion in 2008 and 2009, but also unofficially to regain control of the trafficking routes, is questioned here[107]. The same strategy was reproduced by the new Malian authorities through support for the establishment of GATIA (Imghad and Allies Tuareg Self-Defence Group) and the Lamhar Arab militias in 2015.

The formation of self-defence militias is far from being specific to Mali. Although it is less known, Niger has not been left behind from this point of view. Indeed, the Tuareg and Tubu rebellions in 1991 led to the spread of Self-Defence Movements in the Fulani and Arab communities. Hence the emergence in Manga of the Fulani militia in Diffa and the Arab militia in N'Guigmi. In Azawak, two Arab militias operated in the Tassara area, the Self-Defence Committee (CAD) and the Tassara Vigilance Committee (CVT). According to Emmanuel Grégoire, these foundations received the approval of Prime Minister Amadou Cheffou (GREGOIRE, 2010 p 58). However, this support for training civilians did not produce the disastrous consequences as in Mali. Several explanations may be invoked to explain these differences: tribal polarisations are less in Niger and therefore resentments following inter-community clashes are reduced; considering that the Tassara militias have been officially dissolved, it can be assumed that the Nigerien state is not embroiled in relations of interdependence with these parastatal actors, but is detached from them or uses them for other purposes once peace has been achieved; the escalation of violence is probably bet-

Boilley, *op. cit.*, 1999). The rhetoric of the feudal and slavery-ridden north is still a vivid driver in the state's counter-propaganda in the face of rebellions.

107. For example, a Wikileaks cable refers to the involvement of an important Berabiche officer in drug trafficking.

ter anticipated and defused by the mobilisation of a large network of informers and mediators.

The tendency of post-colonial authorities to rely on parastatal actors, as a way of managing power is far from being innovative. The colonial authorities often used these modalities for managing power due to a lack of resources or willingness (HERBST, 2000). Such configurations prevailed particularly in the Saharan-Sahelian area, the extent of which made managing the territory expensive in terms of human resources. Support for local actors – colonial intermediaries (including the figure of the goumier) – formed an important means of ensuring *indirect rule* here, to the point of interfering in tribal successions. It was frequently combined with community instrumentalisation issues and the colonial authorities supporting some tribes to weaken their neighbours. The case of the Ifoghas, an intermediary for the colonial authorities in the Adrar mountains and who even fought the Ouillimiden rebels, is well documented (BOILLEY, 2012, p 94-95). In Aïr, colonial authority relied on the Kel Ewey. This resulted in major clashes between this tribe and the resistance groups in Kaocen (DEYCARD, 2011).

However, nowadays these strategies for controlling order in the Sahara by a parastatal force are no longer sufficient. Although they allow the rebel movements to be weakened, as was the case with the Arab and Imghad militias which coped with Ibrahim Ag Bahanga in 2008, they cannot ensure controlled order against a background of the disappearance of the large tribal confederations (PEZARD & SHURKIN, 2015). The dispersal of the Malian tribes, which has been ongoing since the start of the 2000s, because of *"the empowerment*" of new families enriched by the grey economy, reinforces this underlying trend. This grey economy (which often justifies possession of a weapon), combined with the subsequent rebellions since 1990, has made access to weapons widespread to all groups, depriving one tribe of the ability to ensure a "hegemonic stability" (KINDLEBERGER, 1973). As we will see in the following section, this "hegemonic stability" may however be guaranteed by the networks.

## The grey economy as an integration factor and social safety valve?

The grey economy constitutes a "pharmacon phenomenon", both a poison and a remedy[108]. Undeniably, it is a means of spreading, or even of triggering the rebellion, as we have already shown. On the other hand, a careful interpretation of the current Nigerien situations obliges us to relativize its only aggressive dimension. Indeed, the grey economy can be seen as one of the factors for the current relative stability in northern Niger.

This activity employs several hundred young ex-rebels who have never been reintegrated or rehabilitated, whose only capital is to exploit the use of weapons and to control the Saharan routes (as declining tourism is no longer a viable option). It also forms a social safety valve; however, it is capable of turning into armed violence as we have seen in Mali during the 2000s. The integrating virtues of the grey economy are due to the structuring of its networks. When it is an issue of rivalries between state networks and independent networks even related to former rebels, it can be a *driver* of conflict, as the case of the 2011 Malian rebellion has very clearly shown (LACHER, 2012). On the contrary, the grey economy becomes a producer of integration since its networks are controlled by one or more men belonging to the group in power making this grey economy a mechanism for state building (BAYART et al, 1997). This being understood as a "rhizome state" (BAYART, 1989), whose grey economy is an important sector. Since these networks are sufficiently powerful to channel, or even neutralise the involvement of independent actors in the grey economy, the latter becomes an integrator. This is the configuration which widely predominates in Niger now. Powerful actors who have benefited from this Nigerien integration system have succeeded in imposing a quasi-monopolistic situation, enabling them to recruit within all the communities (Arabs, Tuaregs, Tubus) to neutralise the risk of community polarisation. These actors, who themselves branch out from the integration system, therefore have no objective reason to seek to challenge it, which reinforces the regime's stability. That is not to say, that there is no competing network in Niger, the roadblocks are fairly frequent from this point of view, but that these few independent networks are too isolated to constitute a spark of rebellion. Herein lies the entire difference with Mali, where the rebellion

108. This image is taken from researcher Reda Benkirane as part of studies which have not been published yet.

was broadly favoured by the rivalry between drug-trafficking groups and originally of an inter-community nature. Since the Malian state chose to support some groups in 2008 and to turn them into militias, this can only exacerbate the tensions between communities.

This situation is of course not a typical ideal to be achieved, being essentially fragile and risky, but is an objective fact, built to suit the penetration of this lucrative business in the Saharan economy, and that the states were not able to or did not want to curb. This reality must be considered to explain how peace is ensured, including when it is a social peace that is largely bought and precarious. It fragility is intrinsically due to the fact that the grey economy, whether smuggling or trafficking, is a cross-border activity whose determinants escape national and local actors. So, to take just one example, the closure of the Algerian border following the outbreak of Operation Serval has drastically curbed the used car trade between Tamanrasset and Agadez, creating several hundred (young) unemployed in the latter city[109].

The two configurations which exist in Mali and Niger are both risky: that the state networks are no longer essential to the operation of the grey economy and also that its actors are independent of it. The risk to Mali would no longer be only seeing rival groups return to confrontation (currently CMA against the Platform), but that all the armed groups in the north agree on a modus operandi which excludes the state from this grey economy. Objectively, the networks of the grey economy in northern Mali no longer have any reason (administratively, logistically, security) to rely on the state networks (information services and security forces) given that the armed groups almost completely control the north. In Niger, the risk focuses on the fact that the dominant network is weakening, either through the attrition on the current government, or through the network's failure which would result in its decline. This would contribute to the emergence of independent networks capable of destabilising the precarious balance found by Niger.

This grey economy is becoming crucial in the dynamics of peacebuilding and peace consolidation. It is a starting point for crises, as we have seen, but also an arrival point for them, from this point of view representing a challenge for international peace engineers not familiar with taking the criminal economy into account in peace dynamics. The crisis and recovery

109. Interview with several former used car dealers, Agadez, May 2016.

from the crisis appear as two moments in a single and same reconfiguration sequence of the regional political economy.

## Foreign mediations

We have seen that foreign interference in Sahelian affairs could be sources of turning to violent action. These interferences explain, to a large extent, why these states are at the same time essential mediators of the crises in Mali and Niger via their respective patronage networks within the rebel groups and by their means of pressure (border closure, crackdown of trafficking, blockade of supplies, etc.) All the rebellions were put down through the intervention of regional mediators, sometimes combined (generally without consultation) with inter-community mediation at a local level as we will see later. Although, these regional mediations are officially intended to bring together the leaders of the main armed groups around the peace accord, they also have the hidden agenda of satisfying the interests of these interested mediators. Controlling the peace processes of these rebellions is a means of controlling the geopolitical dynamics in their south.

Algeria has always been anxious to prevent the Tuareg rebellions in Mali, as well as in Niger from spilling over into its territory and not spreading to their own Tuareg communities. Therefore, it has fluctuated between a repressive position with regard to the 1963 rebellion (border closure and right of pursuit in favour of the Malian army), to a joint political affiliation fund with the Malian socialist government (BOILLEY, 2011), and a position of biased mediator which supports a rebel figure favourable to it. As we have said previously, the 1990, 2006, and 2012 rebellions were all put down by the Algerian government by relying on Iyad Ag Ghaly on each occasion (BOUKHARS, 2012), but also some influential Ifoghas leaders in the armed movements. For Algeria, controlling the political and security dynamics in Kidal, and therefore relying on its leaders, is a condition for stability in its south.

The Libyan intervention in the Sahelian rebellions more broadly reflects the will of the former Libyan leader to spread its influence in its south, in western Africa (PELLERIN, 2012). As for the Sahel, it has made CENSAD (Community of Sahel-Saharan States) the preferred instrument of its diplomacy in Mali and Niger (VALLEE, 2012), not hesitating to interfere in Malian issues in open competition with Algeria. We have discussed the hypothesis

that this rivalry may have contributed to the outbreak of the 2006 rebellion. However, there is no doubt that Algeria and Libya fuelled a rivalry until the end of this rebellion, with Algeria officially managing a peace process that Libya concluded by offering Ibrahim Ag Bahanga a golden exile. Similarly, during the 2007 MNJ rebellion, Algeria and Libya competed in their willingness to co-opt the rebellion leaders (BOILLEY, 2011), Algeria by indirectly supporting some networks and Libya by taking control of the financial burden of reintegrating the MNJ fighters, via Aghaly Alambo in particular, who also found refuge in Libya in 2008. The former leader's actions were a perfect complement to the UN reintegration programme PPCAA (Programme of Peace Consolidation in the Aïr and the Azawak), in order to convince the least inclined to join this programme in exchange for hard cash, (DEYCARD, GUICHAOUA, 2011).

Consequently, these Algerian and Libyan interventions, although they have the merit of effectively putting the rebellions down, are in many respects destabilising. Based on elitist co-optations, these forced-march strategies have serious consequences on internal dynamics, sharpening inter-community rivalries in Mali. In Niger also, they have caused tensions between groups, and the allocation of the peace dividends paid by Gaddafi gave rise to many conflicts surrounding Aghaly Alambo[110]. Above all, because these mediations are only intended to satisfy their geopolitical interests, namely the stability of their borders. Algeria and Libya are tending to reduce their involvement in managing the longer and more sensitive phase of the peace process: *peace building*. This sequence has therefore often remained without backing, as shown by the 2006 rebellion, which was completed by the Kidal Forum in April 2007, which was highly criticised for its lack of preparation[111]. Similarly, the peace achieved in exchange for hard cash in Niger in 2009 was never ratified by a formal process or any official accord. In addition, both states favour support for their satellite(s) to the detriment of the peace process as such. Algeria's position currently, sponsoring a peace process which is partly blocked by Iyad Ag Ghaly, who would however benefit from Algerian protections, is enlightening in this respect.

In the sphere of mediation, the international community plays an important role, not without interference as well. On the one hand, the

110. Interview with a former lieutenant of Aghaly Alambo, Niamey, May 2016.

111. Interview with a prominent Tuareg, Bamako, May 2016.

international community is far from being as homogeneous as its name suggests and even though the Sahel is not the subject of open and stated rivalries between "western partners", the latter can support different approaches[112] in the Sahel. Even within some states, including France, in the context of the last rebellion in Mali, different departments may be driven by interests that do not or scarcely converge. During the 2000s, the open support of the President of the French Republic, Nicolas Sarkozy, for President Amadou Toumani Touré, forced a form of self-censorship about the drift that the country was taking many on civil servants at the Embassy and the Foreign Ministry[113]. During the last rebellion in Mali, the interests of French diplomacy did not always follow those of the French army or intelligence services[114]. These systemic interferences, which fall under sociology of organisations, are likely to paralyse and/or complexify the process of recovering from the crisis.

The international community assumes a leading role in terms of *peace-building*. The financial resources that they mobilise at donor conferences largely determine what will happen to the (very costly) peacebuilding, since the Sahelian states are generally destitute to take on this task. Beyond the volumes committed, it is how they are committed, which shapes how peace will be built. The donors here play very different roles, between institutions like the World Bank which only wishes to deal with central governments (with the risk that the intended beneficiaries do not receive the money or not in full)[115], and other donors, generally bilateral (like Switzerland or regional authorities) which deal with (and lend to) the local authorities. In this latter case, the redistribution channels (through tender markets for example) manage to reach down to the beneficiaries more easily, thus contributing to social peace.

112. The use of armed action to end the armed conflict in 2013 was the subject of intense debate among European states throughout 2012. Interview with a French diplomat, Paris, September 2012.

113. Interview with several French diplomats and senior officials in Paris and Bamako, 2013-2016.

114. *Ibid*.

115. Under its statutes, the World Bank only deals with states.

## Peace from the bottom, community measures being depleted

The regional mediation processes are not sufficient to control all of the (generally inter-community) micro-conflicts that the peace accords voluntarily ignore to seek a consensus around the lowest common denominator[116]. Both levels of mediation are therefore most complementary.

Niger has not had to experiment with these local settlement methods, with the exception of the meeting in Tahoua organised in 1997 to endorse the reconciliation between the Tuareg and Arab populations[117]. North Mali, which has been heavily affected by local inter-community clashes since 1994, empirically developed these local settlement methods. The Bourem meeting, initiated in November 1994, which restored dialogue between the Songhai and Tuareg then at war, gave rise to a series of local meetings which were the source of most of the inter-community settlements related to the rebellion in the region. The Bourem meeting, far from being limited to just the traditional chieftainships (who certainly were responsible for respecting the application of the Bourem accord), involved livestock herders, prominent government figures, and officials from the Ganda Koy (GREMONT, MARTY, MOSSA, HAMARA TOURE, 2004, p71). The last Malian rebellions also experienced such a process concluded by the Anefif Accord in October 2015. This last process is typical of this web between the regional, national, and local levels where tribes, remnants of armed groups, meet together with the Malian state (but without its participation) to endorse an *ad hoc* peace process to the accord officially signed at Algiers four months earlier. Although it has not put an end to the dynamics of conflict in northern Mali, it has undeniably helped to ease tensions between some key actors in the process.

These local areas of dialogue and mediation are intended to put local actors, who do not have or no longer have a say, particularly the traditional chieftainships, at the centre of decision-making. In the past, the latter were able to resolve local conflicts. The conflict resolution between the Arabs and Kountas in 1999 was achieved by mobilising a commission of marabouts who reached a conclusion based on sharia[118]. Similarly, in 2006,

116. Interview with a European Union official involved in negotiating the Algiers Accords, Brussels, June 2015.

117. Interview with a former Nigerien rebel chief, Niamey, May 2016.

118. Interview with a Lamhar community official who took part in the commis-

intra-Idnan tensions were resolved by the different heads of the tribe's groups[119]. Within the tribes relatively removed from armed conflicts, such as the Kel Ansar, the Ouillimiden or the Kel Essouks, the traditional and religious leaders continue to play a role in terms of conflict resolution[120].

However, their role is gradually disintegrating under the effect of two dynamics: the progressive delegitimation of tribal leaders accused of being in the pay of the Malian government (AG YOUSSOUF, BOUHLEL, MARTY, SWIFT, 2012); the erosion of the power of these leaders in favour of the armed groups, often forcing them to remain on the sidelines or align with them without having effective power[121]. Consequently, the local conflicts are nowadays mainly resolved between the leaders of the armed groups, as the traditional leaders are too often reduced to bit players, with the exception of a few tribes. Again, the Anefif process is typical of this primacy of the armed groups in the sense that the meeting brought together the unofficial decision-makers of the rebellion: leaders of armed groups, drug traffickers and intermediaries for the jihadist groups. It shows the change in drivers of the rebellion and therefore the actors who make decisions. The study of the aforesaid community conflict between the Fulani and the Dawsahak also highlights these changes. All forms of vested issues (livestock theft mafia, jihadist groups, rebel groups) have been built around a conflict originally related to the control of natural resources which broadly neutralise the capacity of the group and tribal leaders of the respective communities to move towards peace[122].

Placing the onus of the local mediation processes on traditional leaders who have been doubly weakened – on the one hand by the state since Moussa Traoré, and then by these new armed elites – is therefore completely unrealistic. The disintegration of the traditional system in Mali considerably stretches the local levels of conflict resolution, while they

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sion, Bamako, May 2016.

119. The Idnan tribe is a tribe in the Kel Adagh confederation. It is divided in groups torn by rivalries, particularly the Talkast and the Taitoq. Interview with a prominent Tuareg, Bamako, May 2016. Interview with a prominent Tuareg, Bamako, May 2016.

120. Interview with the head of the Mbera camp, Bamako, May 2016.

121. *Ibid*.

122. Interview with an official from a mediation organisation, Bamako, February 2016.

continue to operate in Niger. Indeed, the Traditional Leaders' Association in Niger is an influential intermediary, enabling the HACP to rely immediately on the leaders of townships and districts to act with the communities, although the latter are criticised for being agents of the authorities[123]. In Mali, although urban areas still see district leaders acting as mediators and intermediaries for the local authorities[124], the rural areas are largely devoid of any form of intermediation with the state.

Among local actors, the religious figures still seem to enjoy a certain social and community legitimacy, particularly the important marabout families which retain a regulatory role in some regions. The case of the religious Kane Diallo family in the Diré (Timbuktu) region is worthy of mention[125]. A religious dynasty which has been able to retain its influence due to trade, the Kounta qadi in the area supported state justice, so that social peace has still been preserved. The existence of this informal network of important families in Mali could thus help to restore traditional mechanisms for effective conflict management. The Algiers Accords, which allow for an enhanced role for the qadis in Mali, are moving in this direction, as Islamic justice can be an effective instrument for controlling tensions.

This section reviews the many tools that the Sahelian states are enlisting in concrete terms to make peace. These tools are activated officially or not and are violent or non-violent. Their complexification, in the form of internationalisation or openness to private economic interests is a reflection of the complexification of the rebellions seen in section 3. This analysis could be developed in at least two directions. Firstly, the interdependencies of these various tools could be studied more systematically. Are they competing or complementary? Complementarities are probably practical and desirable. An example is that of a well programme financed by an international NGO in Niger (i.e. a development intervention), supported by more political consultation work with town councillors and young people locally, conducted more or less formally by the HACP[126]. It is the combination of

123. This is because they come under the Ministry of Interior which compensates them officially.

124. Interview with district leaders in Bamako, Bamako, June 2016.

125. Interview with a former prosecutor in Timbuktu, Bamako, June 2016.

126. The French Development Agency's Crises and Conflicts Unit is entirely based on this logic of complementarity of development actions and promotion of peace.

the two actions which produces the desired stabilisation, as the development project alone could revive local competition for access to resources.

Another configuration of inter-community conflicts suggests the least possible involvement of the state and calls for a very broad local and endogenous resolution scale. The history of Mali since 1990 argues for this. The only sequence of calm experienced by Mali was between 1996 and 2006. During this period, the (relative) peace in northern Mali was due to the benefits of the Bourem process and the prevailing understanding between the communities. The few localised conflicts (such as that between the Kountas and the Arabs) were settled locally by local actors without interference from the Malian government. The 2006 rebellion occurred precisely as a result of this interference which resulted in the valuing of one community (the Imghads) at the expense of the other (the Ifoghas), this pattern has not been fundamentally modified since then. This policy of community preference has even worsened in order to put down the 2006 rebellion through the creation of Arab and Imghad militias.

The other obvious question which would deserve further development is the timing of the various actions: when do you choose the armed response rather than the outstretched hand, selective co-optation or decay? The specific characteristics of rebellions, including the extent of their social base informs the state's choices. However, the actors' perceptions about the intentions or the military capacity of the other parties in the conflict also come into play here. It is the role of mediators to develop these perceptions in the least unfavourable directions possible. This process is only effective provided that the mediations are not competing among themselves and take into account all the mechanisms of the conflict that they are dealing with.

# V - Conclusion: the determinants for peace in the Sahel

This section, which is intended to be conclusive and practical, resumes the main conclusions of our study in terms of peacebuilding in the Sahel. In terms of the complexity of the processes at work, the fact that sovereign interests are at stake which it is very difficult to influence, and finally given the fact that many grey areas continue to surround the logics of rebel engagement and disengagement in the Sahel, our approach is resolutely modest. It consists in highlighting the difficulties and sticking points in peacebuilding, and in designing solutions to circumvent them, without claiming any form of absolute truth.

The peacebuilding processes often involve different timings, which we have highlighted in this report: very short timing for the international community (interested in the formal signing of the peace accord, synonymous with diplomatic victory)[127] **; short or medium for the states (motivated by electoral deadlines and the attraction that the international revenue from peace represents); and long for the stakeholders directly involved in the conflict**. This co-existence of different timings leads to compromises which are at the heart of the negotiating process and which certainly allow for a formal and often snatched signing of an accord. This is done at the risk of leaving aside latent centres of conflict, which will interfere very negatively in the standardised mechanics of the peacebuilding process.

Consequently, the appropriation of the peacebuilding timetables by national and local actors seems important. It is not a question here of making the local level the miracle-solution of peace, but of considering that this clash of timing seems to be at the expense of peace, understood here not as the cessation of hostilities, but as the "positive peace" dear to Galtung. Time is not necessarily the enemy of the recovery of the crisis, especially in a context like that of the Sahel where the fluidity between war

127. In the context of the Malian crisis in 2012, the different parties which made up the international community repeatedly demonstrated their eagerness for the "recovery from the crisis": pressure from France to hold elections in 2013, pressure for the signature of the Algiers Accord, and pressure for the strict observance of the Accord's timetable.

and peace is constant and the natural order of things is an intermediate state of "neither war nor peace."

## A remedy for each context

It appears from our study that the main remedies for recoveries from rebellion have always been the same until now in Mali and in Niger: decentralisation, reintegration (civil and military) and development projects. On the surface, although the results may *a priori* be comparable between the two countries, their capacity to translate into peace actually varies greatly from one country to the other. Although the same remedies do not produce the same results, four hypotheses are used here to explain this difference:

**- The implementation modalities differ from one state to another.** To respond to this first hypothesis with confidence would require the study of the implementation modalities of measures, considered individually and adopted from the end of the 1990 rebellions. By implementation modalities, we mean how these methods have been implemented: by whom? For whose benefit? At what moment? With what follow-up? This study, which would be a huge doctoral degree, would no doubt make it possible to glimpse the significant differences between the two states. No study up to now has investigated how projects have been implemented and the money disbursed. Such an undertaking would undeniably highlight some limitations and counter-productive measures, as will be discussed in the following point.

As a minimum, we can say that the lack of organisations similar to the HACP deprives Mali of an institution with the ability to monitor projects undertaken over time (the HACP now even has a monitoring-evaluation framework managed by the European Union) and therefore how these are conducted. The existing organisations in Mali have always experienced serious governance problems which raise doubt about the effectiveness of the measures implemented. The General Auditor's Office sounds the alarm each year about the scale of corruption, writing for example in 2011 that, "the state is simply stripped and robbed" (ICG, 2014). The ANICT (National Investment Agency for Local Authorities) organisation, which a large part of the funds for northern Mali pass through, does not escape accusations of misappropriation confirmed by an audit of ANICT, financed

at the request of the European Union[128]. It would therefore be necessary to dwell precisely on the amounts disbursed and the projects undertaken (with a very low implementation rate[129]) in order to know if the target populations were actually the beneficiaries. The recent French Senate report does not say anything else: *"Given the cronyism networks built up by the Malian government in the northern municipalities, the choice of projects, partners, or implementing agencies was influenced by fraudulent deals between political entities and private enterprises, sometimes at the expense of the population"* (SENAT, 2016). The Senate here indirectly points to the international community's (passive) responsibility which distributes its aid without carefully observing the use made of it. This observation is far from new, the diversion of humanitarian aid intended for northern Mali was particularly documented in Moussa Traoré's time and played a role in the outbreak of the 1990 rebellion. The same causes[130], with the same actors, producing the same effects; the effects of implementing the 2015 Algiers Accord should be questioned. Symbolically, it can be noted that the demonstrations held in 2011 in Timbuktu to oppose the allocation of public contracts to "non-Timbuktians" as part of the implementation of the PSPSDN broke out again in 2015 after the signing of the Algiers Accord.

These problems in implementing projects which do not benefit the target population, feed the ideological resources of the armed groups which then find a way to extend their militant base, as much as they serve the cause of actors in the grey economy and the jihadist groups which can boast of "feeding" their entourage for the former and banishing all forms of corruption for the latter.

**- Low societal integration between north and south will have a negative influence on the implementation of the accord.** This second hypothesis has mainly been confirmed by this study. Integration must be societal, before being political. We have already highlighted the greater social integration in northern Niger compared to northern Mali, which produces social, economic or political interactions. There are the objective factors

128. Interview with a European Union official, Bamako, July 2015.

129. Interview with an expert from the World Bank, Bamako, June 2015.

130. In 2014, Mali's partners suspended their financial support for the state following the discovery of over-invoicing on private contracts: purchase of a presidential Boeing for 26 million euros and signature of defence contracts for € 105 million.

of community rapprochement and interdependence, and at the same time, the dilution of tribal identities. These identities still find expression in Niger, but more inclusively. Yet, societal integration cannot be asserted through a peace accord and can only be effective in the long term.

Recognising this structural reality is not saying that it cannot be modified by the corrective measures. This observation should inspire more ingenuity on the part of the peacemakers in Mali, so that the development chapter is not limited to a few basic social services intended to re-establish a semblance of relations between the authorities and citizens, or even to some infrastructure thought up in isolation in its regional environment without an integration plan in the Saharan area. Serious thought should be given to this integration of the Malian north with its south, rather than with its north, namely Algeria, so that this economic and therefore societal integration benefits the country politically.

Creating relationships of trust within Malian society is also a prerequisite to societal integration. The term creation is deliberately chosen at the expense of that of restoration, as this is the case for Mali, as we have seen, there has never been trust since Mali's independence. This creation seems to go through a national reconciliation, which has never been completed since 1990, with the historical legacy of 1963 continuing to weigh on the consciousness in northern Mali and being sustained by the atrocities committed by the Malian army. There again, the question of the clash of timing may also be raised, knowing that the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission was set up in Mali, while the stakeholders were still fighting in the north of the country. This reconciliation seems to be a prerequisite – admittedly not enough on its own – so that, for example, any appointment or integration of a Tuareg within the Malian state institutions is not perceived as downward social mobility. This duty of memory can also be realised outside the formal framework of this Commission. Let us think here about writing a shared history of Mali which is the joint work of intellectuals in the north and the south.

**- The socio-political configurations which prevail when signing an accord will largely determine the conditions for its implementation.** It emerges from this study that the complexity of the northern Malian theatre reduces the effectiveness of certain measures adopted under *peacebuilding* or even makes them counter-productive. This is the case, for example, of the civil integration phase which seems to have little or no effect in Mali. Political appointments (advisor, minister, etc.) or institutional (Northern Mali Development Agency for example) which follow

a sequence of rebellion are far from focusing on individuals who are the subject of a consensus within the Tuareg community. During the two terms of ATT for example, the Imghad were appointed at the head of the main institutions created under *peacebuilding*, which continually fuelled the risk that the Ifoghas would use violence to control a political process which was to their disadvantage. These integrations, as we have determined in this report, are not limited to the allocation of a monthly revenue, but are associated with positions of power which are used by their holders to benefit their community. This automatically functions as an integrating tool when the person is not accused of bias within this community, like Brigi Rafini in Niger. However, this may on the contrary act as a foil when the person belongs to a clan and they strengthen their clan at the expense of rival clans in the community or other communities. This is broadly what happened in Mali, on the hand through supporting the Imghads at the expense of the Ifoghas, and then through supporting the Arabs at the expense of many Tuareg tribes, provoking a rebellion on a wide social scale like in 2012.

The observation is the same for decentralisation. Although the results are rather encouraging in Niger despite significant challenges still to be met, they are subject to debate in Mali as discussed in section IV. It should also be added that the current phase (embryonic) of implementing regionalisation in Mali raises more problems than solutions: profiteering on the creation of new territorial entities in the same way as Menaka and Taoudeni; aggravated community rivalries in the run-up to regional elections which promise to be the scene of unresolved conflicts against the background of the last rebellion[131]. This fact supports the argument that Mali, partly under pressure from the international community, is advancing dangerously in terms of *peacebuilding* without guaranteeing the basics for its proper implementation. The organisation of the general assemblies for decentralisation in November 2013, while no peace accord had been reached with the armed groups, illustrates this excessive eagerness (ICG, 2014).

**- Foreign interference neutralises the beneficial effects of peace remedies.** This hypothesis was also broadly confirmed at the end of our study.

131. This worry is shared by the ICG, which considers in Mali that, "decentralisation sometimes generates a radicalisation of community demands and violent tensions around territorial divisions."

The foreign interference – namely Libyan geopolitics (which France and NATO have a major responsibility in), the implantation of jihadist groups and the exponential development of the grey economy – have been direct factors in the outbreak and spreading of the 2012 rebellion in Mali. Although catalytic events of an ideological nature were many and effectively paved the way for the rebellion, these three elements have given it an unprecedented scale. Especially, the last two forms of foreign interference maintain the rebellion, by giving its actors unparalleled financial and military resources in the history of rebellions in the Sahel.

**Behind three of the four hypotheses, is the state's responsibility which is directly and heavily involved.** The implementation modalities of the peace accords to a large extent come under its sovereignty, although as we have said, the international community may play an ancillary role. The socio-political configuration is also largely of its own making because, as we have repeatedly highlighted in this report, the state has continuously aggravated inter-community tensions to the point of them becoming a form of governance, making the context less and less manageable. Finally, this foreign interference is those which the state has the least control. Over. The Libyan factor is obviously completely foreign (and the Malian state objectively multiplied efforts to negotiate the disarmament of Tuaregs returned from Libya), but the development of AQMI and the grey economy, as we have seen, was largely facilitated by the Malian state. The Malian state's direct responsibility should also be emphasised in the delays experienced with the decentralisation process. Political support for this issue at the highest level of state has proved essential to overcome the inertia (known and recognised in Mali) of the Malian central government, structurally resistant to decentralisation which is perceived as relinquishing its prerogatives.

The alleged responsibility of the Malian state in the country's situation may appear paradoxically reassuring. It re-establishes the objective causes to a situation that can appear hopeless. However, the solutions which could have been adapted before 2012, are no longer so today in view of the unprecedented crisis facing the country. Unfortunately, there does not seem to be miracle solutions, as the determinants of current dynamics seem to escape the state which no longer has control over the whole of northern Mali and less and less over its centre.

**The responses, which will take time, are based above all on a reassertion of the Malian state's stamp**, not like that made in 2011 through the relocation of barracks in northern Mali, but by a positive representation of

this state: soldiers who focus their interventions on civilian-military rather than counter-terrorism (lack of atrocities, which unfortunately are still too recurrent); more efficient administrative services focused on the provision of basic services; the reinstatement of fair justice and tools for appeasing inter-individual or community differences. It is only through these stages that the state will be able to rebuild trust with the populations and thus nibble away at the legitimacy enjoyed by the jihadist groups and the actors in the grey economy.

However, these measures cannot be adopted in a conventional framework by state officials, in the current situation in northern and central Mali. They must and can only rely on local actors that are first and foremost group leaders, marabouts, and qadis. Their mobilisation, as informal intermediaries for the state, would make it possible to reinforce their capacity and make them actors for preventing crises and conflicts (BOWD, CHIKWANHA, 2010).

Overcoming *"track one"* therefore does not necessarily weaken the state by delegating its power to others, but bringing the sources of sub-statal authority into line with it. Neither Niger or Mali have achieved this objective (although they have assigned it), but Niger however has elite intermediaries to do it: through the Traditional Leaders' Association; through the very extensive network of the PNDS; through informal (intermarriages) or formal (HACP) interconnections. These elite intermediaries make it possible to more or less discreetly and subtly approach the decision-makers and their "base" contributing to the "rise" in demands from the periphery to the centre all the more easily.

## Unravelling the web of interests in the Sahel and aligning the protagonists' positions

We have highlighted in this study the institutional tangles which contribute to peacebuilding. These tangles operate vertically (between the regional and local peace processes) and horizontally (between the official activity of the process and the informal discussion which take place behind the scenes), between the interests, ideological (which conceal clan or tribal sub-motives) as well as exogenous (grey economy and jihadist groups). The settlement of

these various entanglements is the key to peace in the Sahel if the aforesaid settlement is lasting and fair.

**Durability is based first and foremost on a permanent institutional architecture, so that the *peacebuilding* process withstands changes in the political regime.** In Mali, as we have seen, since the establishment of the Northern Commission in 1992 under the National Pact, there has been no continuity, the ADIN (Authority for the Integrated Development of Northern Mali), and then the ADN, were created as a replacement for the Commission and entrusted to members of the Imghad community. Its original meaning was therefore largely distorted, even to the point of becoming the subject of protests on the part of the rival tribes and more specifically the Ifoghas, with the ADN becoming the symbol of an unfair peace consolidation process. Conversely, we have discussed the continuity of the HACP in Niger, which has spanned the regimes in its current form without being reworked too much, while steering clear of the issues of tribal rivalries.

**Durability therefore very largely depends on fairness, which is based on taking into account all the interests**, without one party appearing too favoured at the expense of another. Yet, it is in direct contradiction with most of the peacemaking strategies favoured up to now, and particularly, the division and community instrumentalisation strategies which create a distortion, automatically causing frustrations that could turn into armed conflict in the short, medium, or long term. This fairness is even undermined, as we have said, by the highly interested involvement of regional powers, playing the role of mediator, particularly Algeria. Since the latter has managed to enforce and assert its interests, it is for other international and national mediators to re-establish a form of fairness by ensuring that the mediation does not harm one or more parties.

**Analysis of the failures of the peace processes in Mali only shows too well the gaps in non-inclusive institutional arrangements**, where the exclusion of one or more parties sows the seeds of a future crisis in a context where opportunities for triggering violent actions are extremely widespread: distribution of arms, interfering regional powers, etc.

One of the concerns raised is the lack of transparency in negotiating these arrangements. The analysis of conflicts in the Sahel constantly pits stated interests and hidden interests. Between the lines, the part played by drug-trafficking interests is raised – determinants but constantly obscured –, the role of regional powers – for whom the north of Mali and Niger forms a buffer zone, and the interests of western powers – within which there may be discordant activities between the different departments. This transparency is a guarantee of the fairness of the arrangement. Even then, the support of a party for the peace process can conceal hidden interests which, once displayed or defended, threaten the structure again.

However, this transparency is not favoured by the fact that the driving factors of rebellions are immediately excluded from the rules of the game set out by the mediators, like again, the grey economy and especially the jihadist groups. For example, let us take the case of the HCUA in the 2012 rebellion in Mali. Its formal support for the peace process was negotiated on the basis of official demands which are only partially representative of its actual demands. It should be remembered from the outset that the HCUA is a remnant of Ansar Dine, yet this organisation militated for the unity of Mali and not for any form of autonomy as the HCUA does nowadays. Moreover, it can legitimately be assumed that the HCUA maintains close and coerced relations with Ansar Dine whose classification as a terrorist group excluded it at the outset from the peace process and makes it de facto infeasible. Such a configuration makes the peace process not very clear and therefore requires the mobilisation of informal communication channels which circumvent the systemic limitations.

**In short, unravelling the web of Sahelian interests requires a dynamic approach to the relationships between the actors in the crisis.** In other terms, it is not enough simply for a peacebuilding approach to be identified and included in the actors' processes by imagining that each one has an established legitimacy that it would be sufficient to recognise in order to achieve peace. The challenge is also to understand the interdependencies between these actors and the compatibility of their agendas and to work to harmonise them.

"The inclusion" celebrated in literature as well as the objectives are too often synonymous with an invitation to share the cake of the "political market" (DE WAAL, 2016)[132] between the many guests. Yet, the expansion

132. In this market, de Waal asserts, "violence is a means of bargaining and sig-

of the monetisation of peace only whets the appetites and the resentments. The inclusion without a long-term vision is limited in scope: integrations in the army without a plan for the promotion or recruitment of future generations; community-based targeting of aid (such as the Tubus as part of the Community Cohesion Initiative in Niger, funded by USAID, and designated as beneficiaries on the basis of obscure criteria).

## Foreign diplomatic interference and national sovereignty

One of the differences we have seen between Niger and Mali is that the former state has also managed to retain control of its peace process, precisely due to the High Authority for the Consolidation of Peace, which nowadays is essential for each donor wishing to intervene in Niger in the area of peace. Besides, the fact that Niger managed to retain the attributes of a sovereign state during the 2000s unlike Mali (whose collusive relations with AQMI we have mentioned) protects it somewhat from foreign diplomatic interference.

**A look at the fragmentation of the peace process in Mali, suggests that these multiple diplomatic interferences make achieving peace more complex.** The goal here is not to rigorously measure the impact of these initiatives, which would probably be an insurmountable methodological challenge. In the light of our study, at least two findings stand out. On the one hand, these often un-coordinated initiatives dilute and fragment the governance of crises; on the other hand, they endogenously create conditions for their continuation: conferences, travel abroad, generous budgets allocated to "community meetings", etc. form a comfortable political economy for its agents and an emollient, or even numbing one, for conflict resolution.

**Indeed, the jungle of peace initiatives very often produces counter-productive effects.** At a regional level, the competition between the mediating states maintains the rebellion more than resolves it, as we have seen between Algeria and Burkina Faso (officially), but also with Morocco, Niger and Mauritania in the mediation of the last Malian crisis. Each state undertakes its mediation with brokers representing well-defined vested interests within the rebellion, resulting in each state defending its component more than the dialogue itself. Maintaining each of these sub-groups

nalling value" (p. 18).

does not encourage them to move towards peace. Quite often, the mediation organisations become – deliberately or not – complicit in these disparate initiatives by endorsing one or other of the mediations, or even undertaking non-governmental ad hoc processes. Although some of these initiatives may be successful (when they perfectly complement the peace process at work), others are counter-productive. When Niger summoned all of the tribal and group leaders together in northern Mali on its territory for a reconciliation meeting in 2014, some representatives from the rebel groups left before the end at the invitation of one of these mediation organisations in Europe[133]. This example illustrates the often unexpected capacity of these organisations to torpedo the processes at work. Similarly, more recently, another smaller organisation tried to negotiate an ad hoc accord to the Algiers Accord on the sly (without the official endorsement of the Malian authorities). This attempt, which ended in failure, seems to have revived some tensions. This confusion is made possible: on the one hand, by the fairly understandable appetite of the actors (state as well as rebels) for the daily allowances, the official travel and other associated material advantages, as well as the symbolic capital offered; on the other hand, because of the Malian state's lack of authority to clarify and arrange legitimate actors to intervene in the peace process.

**The increase in these mediation channels produces a double effect which is particularly detrimental to the peace process.** On the one hand, it dilutes the hierarchical structures within the armed groups and therefore produces new leaders, who are supported materially and in the media by the organisations which sponsor them. This clearly makes the dialogue and achievement of peace more complex. On the other hand, this fragmented process has the effect of diluting national sovereignty. The supranational processes sometimes place states in politically untenable positions, like in Mali in the 2012 crisis where the state endorsed a peace accord which was subject of very little, if any, ownership by Malian civil society and politics. The legitimacy of the Malian state is fairly weakened and the image reflected by the state in public opinion is that of a weak, absent state, even under international tutelage. The establishment of an organisation similar to the HACP in Niger, which would lead at the highest level continuously and by centralising all the peace initiatives undertaken, would improve the consistency of the overall system and would reinforce the state's mark. It

133. Interview with the organiser of this meeting in Niger, electronic exchange, May 2014.

remains to be seen whether Mali is capable of enforcing such an institution on the myriad of actors operating in the country.

**The last form of interference in national sovereignty is counter-terrorism,** for the time being under international tutelage (mainly French and American, but also to a lesser extent Chadian), pending the Malian armed forces (and to a lesser extent the Nigerien) being able to assume this role. The idea here is not to discuss the merit of counter-terrorism operations, but to highlight the paralysing effect of them on the peace that they should be alleviating. Counter-terrorism is a dimension of conflict management, recently introduced to the Sahel and overseen internationally. It has the effect of breaking up the chain of legitimate protagonists of war and peace by foreign imposition, under the performative effect of "terrorist" categorisation, the consequence of which is "we do not talk to terrorists."

This poses a certain number of practical difficulties in the peace process. As the "terrorist" categorisation is considered beyond redemption (since it is results in inclusion on the list of terrorist groups), it deprives the actors in this category of any form of return/reintegration. Yet, we have specifically seen in the Sahelian context that many jihadists are very opportune and without even any ideological veneer. Placement in this category risks, on the contrary, reinforcing them in their initial choice, and over time, increasing the share of ideology in group membership, as many testimonies gathered – at Diffa regarding Boko Haram and in Mali regarding the Fulani in the MUJAO – demonstrate. National authorities should be encouraged to some extent to reclaim control of the "terrorist" labelling in order to keep doors open for some elements in these groups seeking repentance and reintegration.

Furthermore, the armed groups themselves use this categorisation in order to circumvent it better. The existing fluidity between certain armed groups who are signatories to the Algiers Accord and the terrorist groups is no secret from this point of view. Far from being limited to the HCUA as recently reported by France, these collusions affect all the signatory groups and for a good reason: terrorism is a constant which must be dealt with other than solely by counter-terrorism. Once this categorisation is endorsed and is imposed on the Malian state, it deprives the latter of margins for manoeuvre that it deems necessary to achieve peace. It is impossible here not to mention the specific case of Iyad Ag Ghaly. While there is currently lobbying in favour of opening negotiations with the latter (lob-

bying supported by HCUA)[134], and messages are passed to the highest level of the Malian state through unofficial channels, the official message of the Malian state remains that set out by the President in his columns in *Jeune Afrique* in December 2015: "Negotiating with him is out of the question[135]." It cannot be otherwise, as Iyad Ag Ghaly is a "high value target" and the French forces are tracking him in the Kidal region. The existence of active unofficial channels is a remedy to this paralysing situation.

**Finally, the risk that French mark on the Sahel paradoxically is fuelling terrorism should be put forward**, with the legal justification (from the Qu'ranic point of view) of jihad being greatly facilitated as resistance to an attack against Muslims in Islamic lands. Several imams (particularly one in Kayes and one in Mauritania) are known publicly to have supported jihad against France since 2013, but many other cases have been reported unofficially. Our intention is not to suggest that this Qu'ranic argument is justified in any way (and as proof of this, the High Islamic Council of Mali spoke out against the legality of jihad in 2012[136]), but simply relaying the effects caused by counter-terrorist operations objectively serves the jihadist groups' cause, which feeds on the French military presence to denounce a colonialist revival in Islamic countries. This military presence cannot be long-term, otherwise it would justify its critics and feed the idea that it should be fought against.

## Can Niger serve as a role model?

As part of this study, we have put forward Niger's advantages in building and consolidating peace:

- a naturally more lenient legacy which promotes social, political and economic interactions between the north and south;

- progress in the implementation of peace accords, particularly with regard to integration in the army (with the Saharan Security Units) or decentralisation (with the implementation of regionalisation);

134. Interview with Malian officials who had met a mission from HCUA in favour of opening up negotiations with Iyad Ag Ghaly, Bamako, May 2016.

135. *Jeune Afrique*.

136. Interview with an HCI official, Bamako, January 2016.

- a lasting institutional architecture around the HACP which continues the work of peace consolidation beyond regime changes, at the same time spreading a positive image of the Nigerien state ("hearts and minds") in the country's vulnerable regions;

- an extensive integration system which goes beyond the single scope of political appointments of former rebels to integrating them in Niger's political economy;

- a sufficiently inclusive structure to muffle any desires for change expressed by public opinion in the north;

- national sovereignty safeguarded (partly with the support of France, the United States, and now Chad in Diffa) within its territory, preventing the establishment of terrorist groups, which we have seen constitute a new mechanism for violent engagement;

- a windfall effect generated by gold mining at Djado and especially at Tchintabarakaten.

These advantages seem largely to be contributing to Niger's stability, thus supporting the idea that the peace process is in the consolidation phase. However, the country is far from being a role model. In some respects, Niger is similar to a house of cards. As long as no external element undermines it, the structure will hold due to its strengths that we have listed above.

Firstly, in many ways, the key stages of *peacebuilding* have been ignored or have not been completed. As a minimum, no peace accord actually sets the state's post-peace commitments (tacitly) with the MNJ. The national reconciliation process, like in Mali, has never been carried out even if the trauma of Tchintabaraden seems to have been overcome according to some Tuaregs we met. The task of collecting weapons continues, but with the idea that the same drivers of one part of economy in northern Niger (gold mining, smuggling, grey economy) require minimal weapons. Furthermore, there are many sources of cracking, and the Nigerien state is weak in its ability to solve them. This supports the idea that peace is never achieved and that violence remains an important instrument of the Sahelian political arena.

The challenge for Niger is now to endorse the fact that political control between the north and south does not lie in violence, but through the

commitment of institutions such as the Regional Council, the National Assembly or the Prime Minister. While a large share of the former rebels has accepted this idea, their support is fragile and probably not final. The social pressure exerted on these former leaders, as well as the permanence of a successful figure associated with the status of rebel could drive, or even constrain, some of them to join an emerging movement. Finally, let us not forget that hundreds of young fighters remain armed in Aïr, for the time being occupied in the grey economy or gold mining.

Furthermore, Niger is not exempt from exogenous influences whether it be the cross-border grey economy[137], geopolitical unrest from southern Libya[138] or Algeria. This was already strongly felt in 2007 when the MNJ rebellion broke out, whose original motivations seemed to be far removed from the ideological repertoire, but which managed to extend its social and fighter base all the same. From this episode, it should be remembered that there existed and still exists sub-categories of actors expressing a deep frustration which finds satisfaction in rebel engagement. These same reasons maintain a climate of latent tension in northern Niger that the HACP is constantly trying to calm down. Yet, these efforts depend to a large extent on the financial capabilities of state, whose current budgetary difficulties we have already discussed.

137. In August 2016, several traffickers were kidnapped in Niger, reflecting the rivalries which exist in this environment and which could result in the armed settling of scores involving reports of rebellion against the state.

138. In particular, a deterioration of the situation in southern Libya could trigger a wave of Nigeriens returning from southern Libya to northern Niger.

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# Appendix

## Abbreviations

ADC: May 23, 2006 Democratic Alliance for Change

ADIN: Authority for the Integrated Development of Northern Mali

ADN: Northern Mali Development Agency

AQMI: Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb

CRI: Collective for Renewal and Innovation

DGDSE: General Directorate for Documentation and External Security

FFR: Front of the Forces of Recovery

FIAA: Arab Islamic Front of Azawad

FLAA: Aïr and Azawak Liberation Front

FNIS: National Intervention and Security Forces

FPLN: Popular Front for the Liberation of Niger

FPN: Niger Patriotic Front

HACP: High Authority for the Consolidation of Peace

MINUSMA: United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali

MNA: National Movement for Azawad

MNLA: National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad

MNJ: Niger Movement for Justice

MNLA: National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad

MPLA: Popular Movement for the Liberation of Azawad

MUJAO: Movement for the Oneness of Jihad in West Africa

OCDE: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

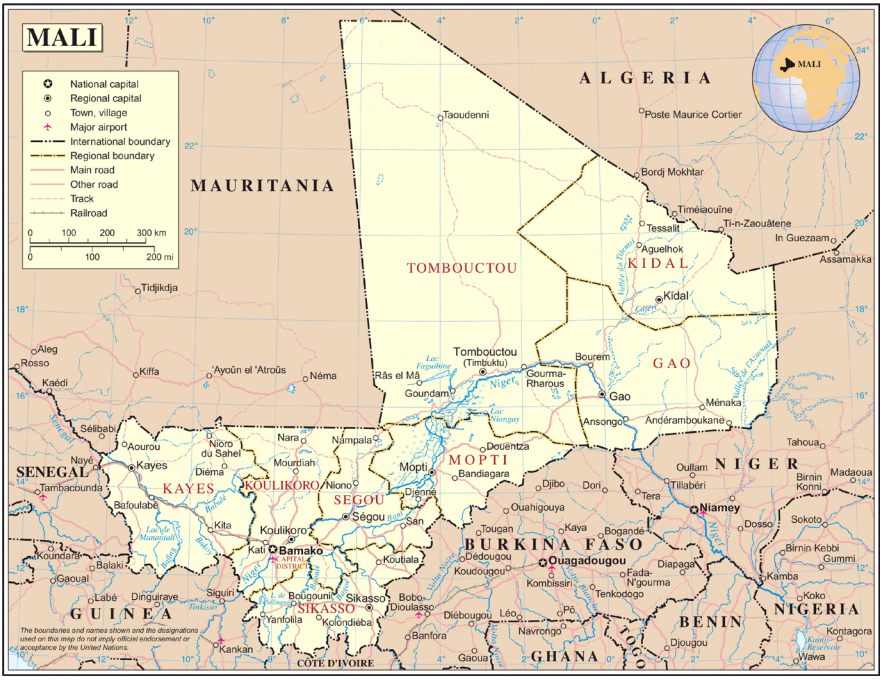
OCRS: Common Organisation of the Saharan Regions

PNDS: Nigerien Party for Democracy and Socialism

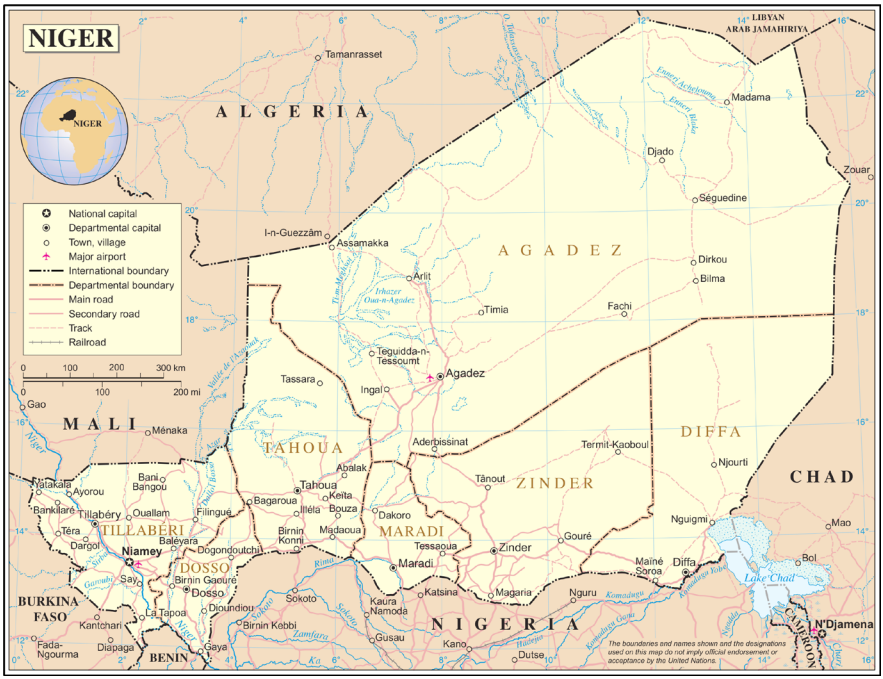
PSPSDN: Special Programme for Peace, Security and Development in Northern Mali

## MAPS

Mali



Niger


NIGER
NIGER
National capital
Departmental capital
Town, village
Major airport
International boundary
Departmental boundary
Main road
Secondary road
Track
Railroad
0 100 200 300 km
0 100 200 mi
LIBYAN ARAB JAMAHIRIYA
ALGERIA
Tamanrasset
Madama
Djado
Zouar
Séguedine
I-n-Guezzâm
Assamakka
AGADEZ
Arlit
Dirkou
Bilma
Timia
Fachi
Iferouane
Teguidda-n-Tessoumt
Agadez
Tassara
Ingal
Gao
MALI
Ménaka
TAHOUA
DIFFA
Aderbissinat
Termit-Kaoboul
Njourti
CHAD
Abalak
Tahoua
Tânout
ZINDER
Yatakala
Ayorou
Bani Bangou
Bagaroua
Keita
Illéla
Bouza
Dakoro
Bankilaré
Tillabéry
Ouallam
Filingue
Nguigmi
Mao
Téra
TILLABÉRI
Birnin Konni
Madaoua
MARADI
Tessaoua
Zinder
Gouré
Dargol
Baleyara
Niamey
Dogondoutchi
Maradi
Mainé Soroa
Diffa
Bol
Lake Chad
DOSSO
Say
Birnin Gaouré
Dosso
Sokoto
Katsina
Magaria
Nguru
Kaura Namoda
BURKINA FASO
La Tapoa
Dioundiou
Kantchari
Birnin Kebbi
NIGERIA
Gusau
Kano
Dutse
N'Djamena
CAMEROON
Fada-Ngourma
Diapaga
Gaya
BENIN
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

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# MAKING PEACE, BUILDING THE STATE. RELATIONS BETWEEN CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND THE SAHELIAN PERIPHERIES IN NIGER AND MALI

**Yvan GUICHAOUA**
**Mathieu PELLERIN**

In this study, Mathieu Pellerin and Yvan Guichaoua examine the methods of peacemaking respectively chosen by Mali and Niger, both exposed to fairly similar security challenges. The approach developed by the authors jointly analyses the evolutions of the protest mobilisations and the forms of governance developed by the states to maintain their security hegemony. Rebel mobilisations and state responses are complexified over time and adapt to each other. Mali and Niger tend to deploy similar, often short-term, strategies for security governance. However, the inclusive efforts and institutional peace intermediaries operate relatively effectively in Niger. In Mali, the communal arms race, partially encouraged by the state, has worsened a security environment that is already structurally more fragile than in Niger.

ÉTUDES

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